

**Struggling to Become:
Youth and the search for respectability in Khayelitsha, Cape Town**

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of MSOC SCI in Social Anthropology.

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Abstract:

This is a story about the struggle to become. In detailing the everyday lives of a group of young men from Khayelitsha, this story provides a context for (or entry point into) a wider discussion about a generation of youth who have been born into precarious social environments bereft of footholds on the ladder to social adulthood. These youth must attempt to come of age and live respectable lives within a politically saturated predicament of bleak prospects and socio-economic exclusion. Yet this is not a story of despair, but one of aspiration. It is an ethnographic account of what Patrick Chabal refers to as ‘the politics of suffering and smiling’: a delineation of *dream* and *drama* (Gondola, 1999) amidst precarity. Despite exclusion from the realms of work and power these young men jettison despondence, drawing on association to partake in theatres of sociability that provide them with new contexts for social mobility. It is within these novel ‘hierarchies of being’ (Fuh, 2012) that they are able to position themselves as eminent social actors (i.e. the *dream*) by acquiring valuable social capital through strategic performances of ritual and repertoire (i.e. the *drama*). By presenting a detailed ethnographic description of the theatres of sociability in which these young men enact their incarnation of eminence, this dissertation contributes to an emerging perspective on the role of association in the social fantasies and possibilities of youth in precarious situations. In this regard the primary goal of this dissertation is to provide an optic into young people’s navigation of precarity, focusing on how they draw on association to reconfigure the geographies of exclusion and inclusion as they chart trajectories from social dereliction to psychosocial redemption.

Introduction:

People of fire:

“We want to carry the same flame our ancestors were carrying before us. This flame we are talking about is the Struggle. We are people of fire.” – Indigenous (member of Brothers of the Cape)

This dissertation is about a group of marginalised young men from Khayelitsha who use their membership to an association (i.e. Brothers of the Cape¹), and the activities within, to make claims to a specific form of social adulthood that is related to, facilitated by, and activated by ideas of a collective ‘Struggle’. This ‘Struggle’ is a concrete yet ambiguous concept with a double-edged meaning. On the one hand it represents the everyday struggles which define life in townships such as Khayelitsha; whilst on the other hand it is used concurrently to represent the political struggle against apartheid (i.e. against government; inequality; and capitalism). This dissertation engages with this concept by examining how Brothers of the Cape as a revolutionary ‘social movement’ strategically build upon these ideas of ‘Struggle’ to market a particular kind of collective accomplishment, legitimate themselves as accomplished, and lay claim to respectable social adulthood.

Neo-apartheid and failed transitions to adulthood:

“Don’t vote in the apartheid elections! Forward to freedom!” – Brothers of the Cape slogan for their anti-electoral campaign.

The young men in this study, despite having been born after apartheid (i.e. as *born-frees*²), face similar persecution to their forefathers as they are sacrificed on the altar of the neo-liberal logic of global capitalism (Saul, 2001). Whereas the oppressor may be less palpable, the oppression is not. With the demise of the malignant state, the black ‘counternation’³ has been emancipated from their apartheid enemy, only to be

¹ Pseudonym used for the association.

² In South Africa this term refers to the youth that were born into democracy after the end of the apartheid era.

³ A term intended to foreground the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of marginalised South African youth (Comaroff, 2000).

cruelly confronted with the rising tide of neoliberal capitalism which has seen erosion of working class identities and mass privatisation vitiate the hopes of constructing an inclusive social democracy (Comaroff, 2005). Due to this breakdown in social contract between state and citizen, a large section of the nation's *born-free* youth are unable to access the social and economic resources with which to pursue conventional trajectories towards adulthood.

As such, the socio-cultural 'initiation' into social adulthood that was once ritually marked by rites of transition can no longer be relied on in South Africa. The metaphor of 'initiation' is apt within this context as the young men in this study view their predicament through a moral prism, claiming a gerontocratic reneging of moral (and social) obligations towards them (Abbink, 2005). It is within this precarious state of being, brought about by a society whose celebrated nationhood has been subverted by coercions which have compromised the sovereignty of its political economy, that members of Brothers of the Cape find themselves viewed as infantilised cadets – regardless of their biological, legal, and even cultural (i.e. the Xhosa *makweta* rite of passage) attainment of adulthood. Thus these young men must attempt to come of age and live respectable lives within a society that does not seem to have a place for them.

The role of associational life:

It is within this context that Brothers of the Cape, as a revolutionary 'social movement', provides a space where they can imagine (and actualise) alternative futures. Amidst uncertainty, this space generates meaning and coherence, stabilising precariousness in their everyday lives. By being part of Brothers of the Cape they are able to assign value to themselves. This is achieved through various 'strategies' (i.e. inter-actions encompassing performance, rules and regulations, discourse and dress code) which provide them with a means to create distinction (i.e. "people like us") whilst gaining visibility and recognition. This recognition is negotiated in novel fields of competition where they vie with other activist associations for social capital in the form of prestige. These 'hierarchies of being' (Fuh, 2012) replace 'old predictabilities' (Furlong, 2000) to provide new possibilities for the attainment of respectability and social adulthood. In this regard associational life is central to becoming: for these marginalised youth with scant possibility of accumulation and

redistribution, Brothers of the Cape is able to provide a new context for social mobility.

Thesis question:

How do marginalised youth draw on association to create respectable adult lives in the midst of precarity? In engaging with this question, this ethnography provides an optic into young people's navigation of precarity, focusing on how they reconfigure the 'geographies of exclusion and inclusion'⁴ as they chart trajectories from social dereliction to psychosocial redemption⁵.

Outline of chapters:

This dissertation is divided into 5 chapters. Chapter 1 presents the theoretical framework used to examine how these young men chart trajectories from social dereliction to psychosocial redemption. In so doing this chapter offers a discussion on the ways in which youth are positioned in society, as well as the ways in which they seek to agentively (re)position themselves. Chapter 2 provides a detailed account of the fieldwork methods employed during my involvement with Brothers of the Cape. In so doing this chapter explains how my multi-method approach attempted to grasp the complexity of participants' experiences in the present as well as linear processes of transition.

Chapter 3 draws on the biographies of two members of Brothers of the Cape to contextualise the association historically. In so doing, the chapter examines the centrality of association in the social formation and constitution of both individual and collective personhood. It especially addresses the place of association in the navigation of youth, and the scripting of identities within the city. The chapter engages with the ways in which marginalised young men generate, claim and legitimate respectability through various encounters and associations with various groups of people. The chapter demonstrates how in order to 'become', young men

⁴ This phrase was coined by Christiansen et al (2006)

⁵ The phrase 'social dereliction to psychosocial redemption' is appropriated from the work of Gondola (1999).

must straddle different temporal identities and play out different roles. Given this, the accomplished young man is seen as a *bricoleur* (i.e. a ‘Jack of all trades’) who strategically displays subjective inventiveness.

Building on the biographies and life trajectories of these two Brothers of the Cape members, the chapter examines how both of them seek to accumulate prestige and respect by continually repositioning themselves across different groups and social contexts. In so doing, the chapter attempts to lay a framework for understanding the significance of viewing Brothers of the Cape as one of many temporary but integral platforms in their attempts to generate stability and gain visibility amidst precariousness. Located at the margins of the city, as in the case of Cape Town where they are excluded both geographically and economically, collective socialisation becomes a valuable strategy to reposition the self across different prestige positions.

Chapter 4 introduces Brothers of the Cape as a revolutionary ‘social movement’. It unpacks how they appropriate ideas of the ‘Struggle’ crafted during apartheid, to both perform and lay claim to respectable social adulthood. In so doing, the chapter examines how this ‘culture of struggle’ manifests itself in the motif of political consciousness inherent in their role as ‘conscious’ hip-hop artists. By establishing themselves as players within Khayelitsha’s field of conscious hip-hop, they are afforded access to a certain novel ‘hierarchy of being’ (Fuh, 2012). It is within this field of competition that they are able to position themselves as eminent social actors by acquiring valuable social capital (i.e. in the form of consecration and valorisation) through strategic performances of ritual and repertoire. This enables them to reconfigure the geographies of inclusion and exclusion (Christiansen et al, 2006). As such, ‘playing the game’ within this field provides a context for a certain way of *being* young, while facilitating a certain process of *becoming*. Thus by presenting a detailed ethnographic description of this theatre of sociability in which Brothers of the Cape enact their incarnation of eminence, this chapter provides a discussion on associational life and the role it plays in the social fantasies and possibilities of youth in precarious environments.

Chapter 5 examines how Brothers of the Cape extend their appropriation of the ‘Struggle’ beyond their involvement in the field of ‘conscious’ hip-hop. Through

these additional repertoires and performances, they index their aspirational mappings and the various spatial terrains they straddle in order to increase their capacity to aspire. In so doing they emerge as *bricoleurs* as part of an agentive strategy of social capital accumulation. Just as the life histories of selected members in Chapter 3 illustrates, Brothers of the Cape utilise their (collective) subjective inventiveness in viewing their 'spatial terrain as an oeuvre' (Nuttall, 2004) through which they can work various networks and spaces – in so doing navigating their aspirational mappings and maximising their potential to become.

In addressing how they move beyond their role as hip-hop artists, the chapter engages with their strategic participation in moral praxis as moral vanguards; and critical civic praxis as political actors. Firstly in their role as moral vanguards, the chapter demonstrates how they construct their moral praxis by drawing on local notions of respectability in order to gain approval from elders and be recognised as respectable social adults who are acutely involved in the moral preservation of the community. Secondly in their involvement in critical civic praxis, the chapter demonstrates how they strategically position themselves as an alternative site of power at the forefront of communal affairs, thereby legitimating their status as established political players and accomplished social adults (Fokwang, 2008). As such, this chapter suggests that the 'performance of revolution' inherent in such activism ought to be viewed as an end in itself, and not solely as a means to an end. Lastly, in examining the meaning these young men ascribe to geographical movement (with regards to the undertaking of such activism), the chapter addresses how for them movement becomes an integral part of their incarnation as eminent political actors on the national stage. In sum this chapter shows how members of Brothers of the Cape are both positioned and position themselves within their socio-generational category; thereby contributing to a discussion on 'youth' as being socio-politically constructed yet open to the construction of counter-positions by way of agentive navigation.

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework and concepts:

1.1 Abstract:

In this chapter I present the theoretical framework used to examine how these young men chart trajectories from social dereliction to psychosocial redemption. I start by introducing the concept of youth, presenting it as relational and situated in a social landscape of knowledge, power, agency and personhood. In so doing I suggest that it is only by shifting our conceptual framework from the chronological or biological domain to the realm of social life that we can adequately engage with the intricacies of the position and unpack how it is negotiated in the context of social interaction. I then apply this conceptual lens to South African youth, focusing on ‘failed transitions’ to adulthood. Here I suggest that ‘precarity’ is a useful analytical tool as it politicises the concept of ‘youth’. I claim that by utilising a framework of precarity, we are able to better understand the deeply political shackles which serve to stymie transition to social adulthood in post-apartheid South Africa. Finally I introduce (and problematise) the notion of agency to illustrate how these young men go about actualising their aspirational goals (i.e. of respectable social adulthood) in praxis through their involvement in associational life. In so doing this chapter provides a theoretical discussion on the ways in which youth are positioned in society, as well as the ways in which they seek to agentively (re)position themselves.

1.2 The concept of ‘youth’:

In Douglas Adams’ *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* a group of ‘hyper-intelligent pan-dimensional beings’ masquerading as mice create a super-computer to tell them the answer to ‘The Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything’. The super-computer takes 7½ million years to work out the answer, but stresses that it is meaningless without anyone knowing the question. The mice then spend 8 million years searching for the question on planet earth, but ultimately fail as the earth is destroyed by an alien race. Requiring a suitably perplexing question worthy of such a title, they decide on: “*How many roads must a man walk down before you can call him a man?*” in reference to the Bob Dylan’s song.

Whilst the answer may not be ‘blowin in the wind’ so to speak, the point I am making is that the concept of ‘youth’ (in relation to the expected transition from youth to adulthood) is ‘incredibly difficult to pin down analytically’ (Honwana and De Boeck, 2005). The generational category of youth cannot simply be understood as an age-

based category. It is instead a social position within the mindset of a particular society where youth perceptions vary depending on context (Balcha, 2010). Social and generational age does not follow linear chronology or biological time but enigmatically ‘shifts’ depending on the configurations of power and positions (Christiansen et al, 2006). In this regard youth can be conceived of as a ‘social shifter’ (Durham, 2004) as when invoked, the term ‘youth’ indexes dynamic sets of social relationships (i.e. of agency, power and autonomy). Individuals are therefore not young by developmental or biological default, but rather are positioned – and seek to position themselves – within generational categories (Christiansen et al, 2006).

Thus the concept of ‘youth’ is relational and situated in a social landscape of knowledge, power, agency and personhood (Honwana and De Boeck, 2005). To imagine the concept relationally is to imagine the forces of sociality (Durham, 2000 cited in *ibid*). In other words, youth as a generational position is bound up in social processes, and it is only by shifting our conceptual framework from the chronological or biological domain to the realm of social life that we can adequately engage with the intricacies of the position and unpack how it is negotiated in the context of social interaction (Christiansen et al, 2006). By adopting this conceptual framework I am able to see how members of Brothers of the Cape navigate their aspirational mappings and create respectable adult lives amidst precarious circumstances. I suggest that it is from this duality as both social *being* and social *becoming* (i.e. being both positioned and seeking to position themselves within socio-generational categories), that ‘youth’ becomes a highly relevant object of research, offering a conversation on the capacity of youth to function as ‘social shifters’ who create social configurations of their utterance but rely on external meanings on the utterance itself (Durham, 2004; *ibid*).

1.3 Failed transitions:

Young South Africans live in precarious times, characterised by the dissipation of ‘old predictabilities’ (Furlong, 2000). What I mean by this, is that failed neoliberal economic policies and a general breakdown in social contract between state and citizen, has resulted in the majority of the nation’s youth being unable to access the social and economic resources with which to pursue conventional trajectories towards adulthood (Honwana, 2012). This supposed state of limbo (paradoxically betwixt and

between adolescence and adulthood) has led young people to be theorised as being trapped in an ‘oxymoronic state of permanent crisis’ (Vigh, 2008), floundering in the liminal temporality of ‘waithood’⁶ (Honwana, 2012).

This arrested adulthood, stemming predominantly from the socio-economic policies espoused by international finance corporations (as well as from the ANC’s bad governance), is indicative of a continental crisis of neoliberal reform in which African youth are increasingly relegated to the margins of society. This is particularly acerbic in South Africa where the black youth, assuming inclusivity within their nascent democracy, have seen the ANC’s abandonment of its original socialist leanings (in favour of the neoliberal logic of global capitalism) lead to mass privatisation and the erosion of working class identities which have vitiated the hopes of constructing an inclusive social democracy, resulting in these blocked opportunities in the transition to adulthood (Comaroff, 2005).

In this regard, the conventional socio-cultural ‘initiation’ into adult society that was once ritually marked by rites of transition can no longer be relied on in South Africa (Abbink, 2005). The metaphor of ‘initiation’ is apt within this context as the *born free* youth view their predicament through a moral prism, claiming a gerontocratic reneging of moral (and social) obligations towards them (ibid). It is within this precarious state of being, brought about by a society whose celebrated nationhood has been subverted by coercions which have compromised the sovereignty of its political economy, that the young men within this study find themselves viewed as infantilised cadets in ‘waithood’ – regardless of their biological, legal, and even cultural (i.e. the Xhosa *makweta* rite of passage) attainment of adulthood (Comaroff, 2005).

1.4 Precarity:

Whilst I suggest that a degree of scepticism should abound when neologisms such as ‘waithood’ are co-opted to describe that which is already known, I believe that ‘precarity’ is a useful analytical tool in social research as it politicises the concept of ‘youth’. By utilising a framework of precarity, we are able to better understand the

⁶ A portmanteau word encompassing ‘wait’ and ‘hood’ to mean ‘waiting for adulthood’ (Honwana, 2012)

deeply political shackles which serve to stymie transition to social adulthood. Beyond systematic socio-economic marginalisation however, to speak of the precarity of our nation's youth is to invoke the politically imbued issue of how certain South Africans lives are not conceived of or do not qualify as 'lives' within certain epistemological frames (Butler, 2010). What I mean by this, is that precarity renders a particular type of political subject who is not recognised as worth protecting or nurturing. Thus in ontologically questioning what it means to be a 'youth' in South Africa, the optic of precarity helps to bring into focus a 'being' of life that is constituted through selective means and cannot be comprehended outside of the operations of political power (ibid).

The word 'precarity' is derived from the term 'precariat' (as used by Amimiya Karin) to describe a 'precarious proletariat', or the emergence of flexible labour and insecure employment (Allison, 2012). In its original political usage it was conceived of as a specific form of 'societal malaise' (Neilson and Rossiter, 2005) induced by neoliberal labour market conditions, and thus oriented around working experiences (Waite, 2009). Conceptualised as such it became a catalyst for mobilisation, utilised as a central motif by social activists to unite disparate neoliberal workers in challenging capitalist hegemony (Foti, 2005, ibid). However whilst this political neologism was borne out of the marginalisation generated by the prevalence of contingent or precarious labour, it has since been appropriated by contemporary scholarship (see: Butler, 2012; Allison, 2012; Waite, 2009; Lee and Kofman, 2012) to apply to a more general state of insecurity in life (including but not confined to insecure employment). It is from this contemporary frame of reference that I situate my conceptual understanding of such.

Precarity in this regard transcends the realms of labour and encompasses the myriad ways in which precariousness manifests itself in the lives of those constrained by the operations of political power. Yet a distinction must be drawn between precariousness and precarity itself. Whilst precariousness is an implicit facet of human life (in the sense that we are all innately vulnerable), precarity (as a fundamentally political construct) refers to its uneven distribution within the operations of power. It is within this context that I suggest precarity can be utilised as an analytical tool in studies of 'youth' to closer examine the uneven distribution of 'material, existential and social precarity' (Allison, 2012), and bring to the fore how this is inseparable from

discussions of youth to adult transition. Those afforded the means by which to pursue conventional trajectories towards adulthood, and those left to languish in a liminal state of temporality becomes the basis of precarity as an analytical tool – ultimately facilitating the understanding of ‘youth’ as an intrinsically political construct.

For the young men in this study, the ‘being’ of the body is shaped by blocked opportunities. Despite having been born in the aftermath of the malignant apartheid state (i.e. as supposed *born free* youth), they face similar persecution as they are sacrificed on the altar of the neoliberal logic of global capitalism (Saul, 2001). Whereas the oppressor may be less palpable, the oppression is not. Like their forefathers, these young men are not conceived of as worth protecting or nurturing within certain epistemological frames. They form the faceless throng of disposable subjects left unrecognised by the capitalist state. The ‘being’ of the body to which this ontology refers is one that is given over to others, to social and political organisations which have served to unevenly distribute precariousness, minimising insecurity for some while leaving others to dwindle in a tumult of constraint (Butler, 2012). In this regard one cannot define the ontology of the youth’s body and then refer to the social meanings the body assumes; instead the body is subject to social moulding, which makes the ontology of the body a ‘social ontology’ (ibid).

So as apartheid’s racialised distribution of precariousness is largely upheld and perpetuated by neoliberal ideology, a significant section of our nation’s *born free* youth must attempt to find a place in a society that does not have one for them. A society whose democratic façade is best expressed in Orwellian terms, ‘with all persons being equal, but some being more equal than others’. For these unrecognised youth of the ‘rainbow nation’ (where the metaphor is more aptly suited to the racial stratification of ambient insecurity), precarity serves to haunt their very being, constraining their possibilities to etch out respectable lives by denying them footholds on the ladder to social adulthood. It is within this context that precarity provides an effective framework for better understanding ‘youth’ as a construct of the mechanisms of power.

Given this constraint and marginalisation, dominant discourse has tended to theorise such youth in dichotomous terms: either *at risk* (i.e. as victims) or *as risk* (i.e. as

perpetrators) – creating the inference that they must either be rescued or controlled. As ‘victims’ of ambient insecurity they are portrayed as ‘fragile’ (Honwana and De Boeck, 2005), ‘dependent’ (Thomas, 2000) and in desperate need of intervention (thereby bringing external aid industries into fruition). As ‘perpetrators’ they are seen as unlicensed ‘soldiers of fortune’ (Fuh, 2012) governed by their frustrations and prone to violent proclivity (Frederikson and Munive, 2010). It is within this crude dichotomy that such youth are tacitly understood to be a group without agency.

However how do we as anthropologists move beyond such linear epistemologies? How do we portray the complexities of everyday life as ‘lived’ rather than represented? In researching youth and precarity I suggest a ‘lens of affect’: examining not only the affective state of precarity as it is ordinarily experienced, psychically sensed, and socially embodied, but also the affects deployed in what I term the politics of psychosocial redemption (Berlant 2007, Mazzarella 2009; Allison, 2012). Such a lens calls for an inquiry into agentive latitude amidst exclusion, providing the opportunity to analyse the ways in which young people forge alternative futures within highly constricted environments. In so doing moving beyond the understanding of young people as determined by their lot, and recognising the full manifestation of agency through novel forms of being (Fuh, 2012).

1.5 Agency:

Employing such a ‘lens of affect’ requires grappling with the theoretical underpinnings of agency, a concept which has emerged as a point of great dispute in contemporary social theory. Whilst variants of political-institution analysis and normative theory have attacked, defended and resuscitated the concept in contradictory ways, at the crux of the debate is the fact that the term ‘agency’ itself has maintained an enigmatic vagueness despite its association with terms such as freedom, creativity and selfhood (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Moreover, in efforts to illustrate the interpenetration of structure and agency, theorists have largely failed to characterise agency as its own analytical category with temporally variable social manifestations and distinctive theoretical dimensions, essentially resulting in a vague conception that tends to remain so closely tied to structure that one cannot adequately comprehend the various ways in which agency shapes social action (ibid).

Taking this into account, I situate my understanding of agency within Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) theory of *relational pragmatics* which moves beyond such one-dimensional views (which tend to focus on either 'routine', 'purpose' or 'judgement'), and instead reconceptualises agency as being a dynamic interplay between these three dimensions (Biesta and Tedder, 2006). In this regard they suggest agency should be understood as a temporally embedded process of social interaction, informed by the past (in its habitual sense), but also oriented toward the future (as the capacity to imagine alternative trajectories) and toward the present (as the capacity to contextualise both past habits and future aspirations within the contingencies of the moment) (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). This results in them defining agency as "the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments – the temporal-relational contexts of action – which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgement, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations" (ibid:970). This definition encompasses Mead's understanding of the positioning of actors "within temporal passage, involving the continual reconstruction of their orientations toward past and future in response to emergent events" (ibid:971 cited in Biesta and Tedder, 2006).

In their theorising Emirbayer and Mische refer to the three dimensions of agency as the 'chordal triad', composed of the iterational element (i.e. the past), the projective element (i.e. the future) and the practical-evaluative element (i.e. the present). The iterational element refers to the selective reactivation by actors of past actions and thought patterns, routinely incorporated in practical activity, thereby providing order and stability (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). What this equates to is the fact that although experience takes place in the present, the present is affected by the past (i.e. with past experiences conditioning present actions) (Wiffen, 2012). This is manifested in an individual's capacity to recall, select and apply tacit schemas of action developed through past experiences (Biesta and Tedder, 2006). However the agentic dimension is not simply located in one's possession of such schemas (which exist as both cognitive and corporeal patterns) but rather in how one is able to selectively recognise, locate and utilise such schemas (ibid; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). In this regard the locus of agency is situated in an individual's orientations towards their schemas, as opposed to in the schemas themselves (Biesta and Tedder, 2006). Thus

whilst this element is the least reflective (due to its reproduction of social structure) it is nonetheless agentic as it involves ‘attention, intention and effort’ (Berger, 2008; Wiffen, 2012).

The projective element focuses on the ability of actors to imagine future trajectories by reconfiguring past thoughts, actions and structures in relation to hopes and dreams for the future (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). In this regard individuals move beyond simple repetition of past routines, reconsidering and reformulating their schemas as inventors of new possibilities (Biesta and Tedder, 2006; Wiffen, 2012). This imaginative engagement with the future enables individuals to separate themselves from the schemas and habits that restrict them (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Here the locus of agency is situated in what Emirbayer and Mische refer to as the ‘hypothesisation of experience’ as actors generate alternative responses to their dilemmas (Biesta and Tedder, 2006). This (in close relation to Schutz’s notion of ‘the project’) involves the construction of changing images of where they think they are going, where they want to be going, and how they can get there (ibid; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Finally, the practical-evaluative element refers to the capacity of individuals to make normative and practical judgements among alternative trajectories of action in response to the contingencies of the moment (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). In this regard the locus of agency is situated in the ‘contextualisation of social experience’ which involves the way in which individuals bring their past knowledge and future directions to bear on the present situation (ibid; Biesta and Tedder, 2006).

Utilising such a framework is helpful as it emphasises that agency does not simply emerge from nowhere but builds upon past patterns of thought and action (i.e. the iterational element); whilst simultaneously being ‘motivated’ in its linkage to the imaginative generation of future trajectories (i.e. the projective element); as it is acted out in the present (i.e. the practical-evaluative element) (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Priestley, 2012). Framed as such within my analysis of youth and precarity, the onus here is not just on the triad of reflexivity, imagination and normative judgement drawn upon in response to present dilemmas, but specifically on the active attempts to forge respectable lives which “actively speaks to both the past and present through the constant incorporation and (re)configuration of old elements in new ways” (Fuh, 2012:5). In this regard it provides an effective way of understanding how these young

men exercise constant reflexivity and imagination in their ‘navigation’ from social dereliction to psychosocial redemption.

1.6 Navigation:

My use of the word ‘navigation’ refers to my understanding of agency in metaphorical terms. I do not use the metaphor in frivolous whimsy, but rather to purposefully convey the notion of movement within movement (i.e. a ship on the ocean). Used as such within my dissertation, it provides an understanding of how these young men are both moved and seek to move within their precarious social environments (Vigh, 2003). In this regard it generates an image which speaks to Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) conception of a dynamic interplay between structure and agency in which actors shift between agentic orientations, dialogically reformulating the internal composition of their chordal triad as their capacity for agentive movement (i.e. navigation) is increased or decreased in relation to the structured yet flexible social environments (i.e. the ocean) within which they act. Thus the metaphor of ‘navigation’ provides a hermeneutic trope to better conceptualise the interplay between agency and precarity in attempts by youth to disentangle themselves from constraining structures.

However whilst the concept of navigation has been used frequently within contemporary youth studies (see: Honwana, 2012; Fokwang, 2008; Durham, 2012; van Dijk et al, 2011), I take issue with the tendency to equate it solely with extemporaneity. Academic notions of *débrouillage* (i.e. ‘making do’) and *desenrascar a vida* (i.e. ‘eking out a living’) situate such navigation in the domain of improvisation, as ad-lib strugglers making it up as they go along so to speak (Vigh, 2009; Honwana, 2012). Even Vigh himself, whose theory I build on, associates his notion of ‘social navigation’ with the Guinean Creole term *dubriagem*, which like the aforementioned notions implies navigation in terms of short-term tactics as opposed to long-term strategies. This draws on de Certeau’s (1984) distinction between ‘tactics’ and ‘strategies’, in his assertion of tactics as being the weapons of the poor, used to ‘get by’ (Honwana, 2012). Whilst I do not dispute the validity of such hypotheses, I claim that within the context of striving towards psychosocial redemption, the young men in this study exhibit distinctive moral, social and political ‘strategies’ – devoid of

extemporaneity – approaching such navigation as future-oriented agents who utilise collective agency to actualise their aspirations in praxis (ibid; Vigh 2009). In the following section I will address: (1) how these aspirations (i.e. the notions of respectability and adulthood) essentially hinge on involvement in associational life; and (2) how they are actualised through the aforementioned ‘strategies’.

1.7 Aspirations and associational life:

If we take as a starting point Appadurai’s (2004) claim that aspirations are conceived of in spatial terms as one’s capacity to navigate an aspirational map made up of pathways and nodes, we are able to frame the affects of associational life on aspirations in such analogical terms. According to Appadurai, the aspirational maps of the affluent consist of a dense combination of pathways and nodes, whereas the aspirational maps of those living precarious lives are made up of much thinner pathways and nodes. These pathways are essentially the routes which connect one’s dreams (i.e. abstract nodes) to a plausible actualisation of such dreams (i.e. concrete nodes). It is not the case that those living precarious lives cannot aspire, it is simply that aspirations are formed in the ‘thickness of social life’ (Appadurai, 2004), a practice which survives on repetition, refutation and conjecture, and in the midst of precarity such opportunities are largely stifled – resulting in a limited capacity to aspire. Thus aspirations are socially determined, with the terms of recognition adversely affecting those beset by precarity, denying them ‘voice’ (Ray, 2003a). In this regard one’s practice of aspiration is connected to this voice which requires expression through performances and actions that have local cultural force. I suggest that the performance of voice is a means by which those involved in associational life can alter these terms of recognition and renounce social dereliction.

My use of the term ‘social dereliction’ refers not only to the affective state as it is ordinarily experienced, but also to the way in which it is socially embodied. What I mean by this, is that youth in Khayelitsha living with negative terms of recognition may subscribe to norms which further erode their dignity and intensify their inequality. In this way they are not only subject to such discrimination, but are complicit within it (Dudwick et al, 2006). Such ‘adaptive preference’ (Nussbaum, 2000) is manifested in their adherence to norms legitimising their lack of value. The result is the creation of

what is referred to as an ‘inequality trap’⁷ – i.e. the embodiment of social dereliction. Escaping such inequality traps entails increasing one’s capacity to aspire. By increasing the capacity to aspire, one increases the capacity to feasibly visualise a pathway between a dream and the actualisation of that dream, in so doing improving one’s life materially or symbolically. I suggest that associational life is one way in which youth are able to create pathways between these abstract and concrete nodes (i.e. with the primary ‘concrete nodes’ within Brothers of the Cape’s aspirational mappings being the attainment of respectability and adulthood).

By being part of an association⁸, youth are able to assign value to themselves. This is achieved through various ‘strategies’ (i.e. inter-actions encompassing performance, rules and regulations, discourse and dress code) which provide members with a means to create distinction (i.e. “people like us”) whilst gaining visibility and recognition. This visibility and recognition is negotiated in novel fields of competition where players (i.e. associations) vie for social capital in the form of prestige. These ‘hierarchies of being’ (Fuh, 2012) replace ‘old predictabilities’ (Furlong, 2000) to provide new possibilities for the attainment of respectability and adulthood. In this regard associational life is central to becoming: for marginalised youth with scant possibility of accumulation and redistribution, associations such as Brothers of the Cape are able to provide new contexts for social mobility.

1.8 Conclusion:

In sum, associations are spaces where precariously positioned youth can imagine (and actualise) alternative futures. In a context of uncertainty, these spaces generate meaning and coherence, stabilising precariousness in everyday life. They provide youth with a platform to exercise new modalities and reconfigure the geographies of inclusion and exclusion. By drawing on collective agency to reflect on present subjectivities while shaping and being shaped by past experiences and aspirations for a better future, such youth challenge linear epistemologies bracketing them as ‘non-agentive cadets’ (Warnier, 1996; Argenti; 2007). In this regard they emerge as active agents, charting trajectories from social dereliction to psychosocial redemption by

⁷ A term coined by the World Bank.

⁸ My work on association builds on the work done by Fuh (2012) and Fokwang (2008).

intentionally acting within the contexts in which they find themselves rather than waiting to be acted upon. Thus we ought to approach youth as both social *being* and social *becoming*: as a position in movement (Vigh, 2003). Youth is at once an internally and externally shaped social position; as well as part of a greater societal and generational process (i.e. a state of becoming) (Christiansen et al, 2006). In writing this dissertation I have accounted for both the ways in which youth are positioned in society, as well as the ways in which they seek to position themselves, thereby shedding light on the ways in which youth is socio-politically constructed (i.e. in reference to precarity) as well as the ways in which youth agentively forge counter-positions (e.g. through association).

Chapter 2: Methodology:

2.1 Abstract:

In this chapter I provide a detailed account of the fieldwork methods employed during my involvement with Brothers of the Cape. In so doing I explain how being an honorary 'intern' within the association, I was simultaneously an insider and outsider and had to negotiate my positionality in varying contexts and conditions⁹. Accepting that fieldwork is partial and located in specific contexts is a fundamental tenet of ethnographic research, and I discuss the liminality (i.e. the nature of being betwixt and between) that is not only qualitative research, but also the lived reality of young men in the process of 'becoming'. Attempting to grasp the complexity of participants' experiences in the present as well as linear processes of transition, I indicate how my ethnographic observation was supplemented by a multi-method approach consisting of photo-voice, oral life histories and semi-structured interviews.

2.2 Researching youth in South Africa:

The way in which we have talked about (and researched) South African youth has generally had more to do with the socio-political landscape of South Africa than the actual youth themselves (Durham 2000). Research into South African youth in the 1980's focused predominantly on their role in the apartheid struggle. This struggle narrative, which played out on the 'battlefields' of the nation's townships, became synonymous with the youth of the generation. As such, they were represented as either 'heroes' (of the liberation struggle), or 'villains' (seen to be violent and uncontrolled) depending on one's political vantage-point (Seekings, 2008). In the 1990's, after the political transition and the onset of democracy, these same youth who had boycotted education and violently fought government forces in the name of liberation became labelled as a 'lost generation' (Seekings, 1995), seen as a threat to state governance due to being uneducated and supposedly schooled only in violence and callow rhetoric (Seekings 2008). This saw the birth of a moral stigma branding the nation's youth as potential perpetrators (i.e. *as risk*).

⁹ Fokwang, 2008

This moral stigma (despite it arguably being born in the minds of political leaders and legitimated by the policy studies industry¹⁰) has perdured in contemporary discourse, with the understanding that amidst socio-economic precarity, the nation's youth have the proclivity to turn to criminality in order to survive. This equation of youth with immorality is perpetuated (albeit inadvertently) by the abundance of academic research focusing on youth and violence (see: Salo, 2006; Kynoch, 2003; Wood, 2003; Pieterse et al, 2011; Scheper-Hughes, 2004). Apart from research into youth *as risk*, the ambient insecurity engendered by neo-liberalism (see: Carter, 2001; May, 2000; Aliber, 2003); as well as the onset of a burgeoning HIV epidemic (see: Vermaak et al, 2005; Reddy et al, 2002; Shisana, 2005), has resulted in a prevalent academic focus on South African youth as victims (i.e. youth *at risk*). Beyond this dichotomy of youth *as risk* or *at risk*, we are however beginning to see exciting new research into local youth sociabilities (i.e. youth groups; hip-hop crews; fashion cults; sports clubs etc) which serve to stabilise precariousness in everyday life (see: Dolby, 2001; Nutall, 2004; Bogatsu, 2003; Haupt, 2006). It is within this context that my research is situated.

2.3 The field site:

Fieldwork for this study was conducted in the neighbourhood of 'Site C' in Khayelitsha, a sprawling township located on the outskirts of Cape Town. Established in 1985 its conception was a product of mass forced removals as the apartheid government (under the Group areas Act¹¹) sought to bring the mushrooming informal settlements in the Western Cape under control. Today, some two decades after the dissolution of the malignant regime, it is still blighted by crippling precarity. The onset of post-apartheid capitalism has essentially perpetuated deep-seated racialised marginalisation, with residents of Khayelitsha left to wither under the logic of neo-liberalism. Plagued by acute poverty and the erosion of dignity, this arid wasteland has been conceived of as a place of implicit suffering – a 'sewer of despair' (Miyeni, 2011). As discussed above, within this discourse is the understanding that amidst such despair young men from Khayelitsha have the tendency to turn to criminality in order

¹⁰ Seekings, 1996

¹¹ The Group Areas Act of 1950 was an apartheid law aimed at (racialised) residential segregation.

to survive (i.e. as *tsotsi*'s¹²). This wretched stigma models their milieu as sites of dysfunction where social debris festers in immoral and wanton abandon. Such perceptions not only misconstrue social reality, but fail to portray such spaces as 'lived' rather than 'represented'. As such we lose sight of the complexities and nuances of everyday life – of the generative endeavour of young men to jettison despondence and weave new biographies amidst precarity.

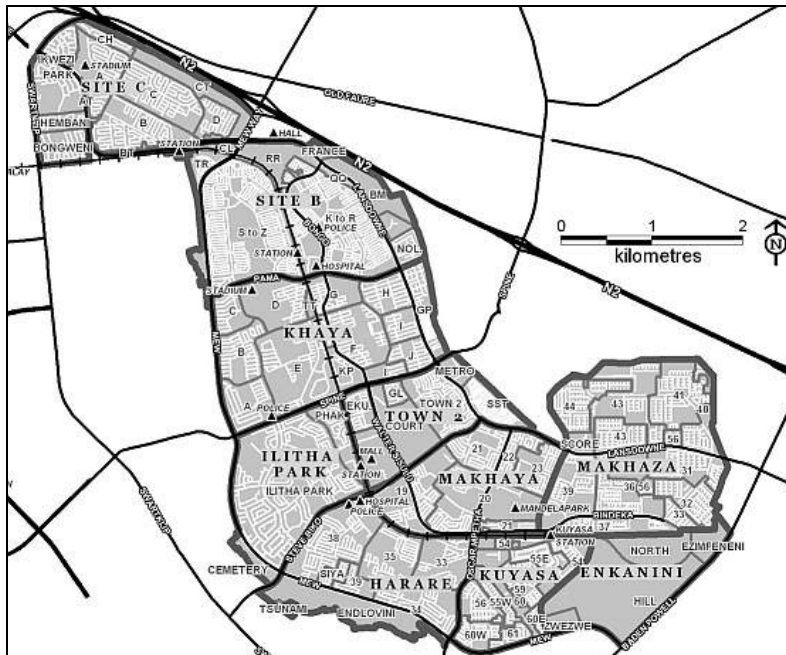


Fig 1: Map of Khayelitsha with Site C located in upper left corner.

2.4 Becoming a member of Brothers of the Cape:

The choice of Brothers of the Cape was serendipitous. Setting out to study youth and civic participation, I made contact with the International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG); a Salt River based NGO providing support for local labour and social movements. During a discussion with management regarding potential movements with which to work, I was informed that the organisation's receptionist was a member of an "interesting" group of progressive youth activists based in Khayelitsha. This piqued my attention, and so ensued a chance meeting with Sipho Nkosi of Brothers of the Cape. Expressing my research intentions to him, he

¹² A *tsotsi* is a young urban black criminal in South Africa.

agreed to convey my request to the association, stressing that my acceptance would be dependent on group consensus.

The following week he invited me to attend the association's Sunday meeting in order to discuss my proposed research with the group. The set venue was fellow member 'Info's' parents' house in Site C. Located on the periphery of a grassy common beyond the Mew Way interchange, the modest concrete home (the interior of which I was never permitted to enter) had a semi-detached quarters in which Info resided. This small dank room formed the headquarters of the organisation where all collective decisions were made. In preparation for the meeting, plastic garden chairs had been assembled in the cramped space between the bed and the doorway. Over the course of my involvement with the association I would come to understand this dusty bedroom to be a prestigious amphitheatre for the performance of eminence. As I waited for the members to arrive, Info was beckoned to complete his dish-washing duties, the inter-leading doorway between the main house effectively separating his identity as acquiescent *inkwenkwe* (i.e. small boy) from that of his performative persona as established *amadoda* (i.e. accomplished social adult).

Once all members had assembled, the meeting commenced with the chairman recapping the previous week's minutes and reading out the proposed agenda for the day. At this point my presence was acknowledged and Sipho, with a subtle tilt of his open palm, permitted me to 'have the floor' and address the association. I explained to the collective that my intention was to examine how young men in Khayelitsha coped with the challenges brought about by socio-economic exclusion. In doing so I expressed my desire to be inducted as a member and actively participate as such. This was met with stern-faced nodding and fervent note-taking. The formal rigidity of proceedings was periodically punctuated by the jovial chatter of Info's family in the adjoining room. After a protracted period of discussion, Sipho expressed the association's readiness to assist my research, granting me permission to participate as a bona fide "intern" for the duration of my fieldwork. Thus began my interaction with(in) Brothers of the Cape.

2.5 Positionality within Brothers of the Cape:

I use the term ‘with(in)’ deliberately in order to convey how I was simultaneously an insider and outsider and had to negotiate my positionality in varying contexts and conditions. Following my induction as an intern, I began to participate as an insider, routinely taking part in the association’s various activities. Besides attending the weekly Sunday meeting, I accompanied the association to communal gatherings such as Friday night film screenings, political rallies, left-wing public forums and hip-hop concerts. Where I could, I participated as a regular member (e.g. helping with the setting up of venues for performances; fundraising; and carrying out administrative tasks on behalf of the association). Furthermore, I was held to the same high standards imposed on each member regarding punctuality and attendance (in one instance being requested by the chairman to apologise to the association for breaching such protocol). So I was in many respects an insider, however my positionality was shaped by a myriad of other factors: In addition to my disparate race and class, I was not an active participant in the association’s musical performances, did not subscribe to their political ideology, was not fluent in isiXhosa (or local cultural mores), was not well-versed in their dogma, and did not share a collective affinity towards hip-hop music/sub-culture. These factors, coupled with the glaring reality that I was unable to relate to their community campaigns (e.g. sanitation and housing) on a first-hand basis, meant that I was simultaneously an insider and an outsider. As such I had to account for this positionality reflexively, maintaining cognisance of the fact that these determinants affected how I was related to within the association.

2.6 The multi-method research process:

1. Participant observation:

Although Site C was the central location of my fieldwork, in practice my fieldwork took place within an array of social milieu spread out across the city. I came to understand that good field data took time and required prolonged interaction with these young men, not only to gain a clearer understanding of their everyday lives, but also to gain trust and build rapport. I exercised Geertz’ (1973) notion of ‘deep hanging out’, participating in and observing their daily routines as much as was

feasibly possible. This involved ‘hanging out’ with them in their homes, on dusty street corners, in crowded taxis, and in *shabeens* (i.e. drinking halls). By immersing myself in their social worlds, I was able to acquire informal knowledge and insight into embodied practices which could not have been attained through other qualitative means. At times I struggled with my dual role as both participant and observer. During group activities I would participate as a regular member, often opting to preference interaction over note-taking so as not to further underscore my outsider status. In these instances, where note-taking would have jeopardised my position, I relied on recall and a voice recorder (i.e. I recoded all meetings and social discussions). Over the course of my fieldwork I formed friendships with many of the members, while my relationship with others remained distant. Some members referred to me as ‘comrade’ or ‘*Cde*’ (appropriated from its original usage in Zimbabwe’s Zanu PF Party to denote an anti-state ‘brother in arms’), whilst others refrained from extending me such coterie recognition. As such, I did not embody a fixed identity during my fieldwork, but rather moved between various identities as a researcher, friend, white, patron and fellow member (Langevang, 2007).

2. Life history interviews:

I conducted interviews throughout the research process, often informally (e.g. on public transport, in *shabeens*, and at community gatherings) and other times formally at a prearranged location. I sought to collect retrospective narratives to provide me with an historic window into how these young men have set about confronting and navigating precariousness in everyday life. In this respect, I explored ‘vital conjunctures’ (Johnson-Hanks, 2002) and critical networks which have impacted on their identities, aspirations and life trajectories. By ‘vital conjunctures’ I refer to the intersection between individual aspirations and structural expectations (Langevang, 2007). This focus afforded me a better understanding of the complex nature of their (youth) transitions and the multiple and fluid character of their aspirations (ibid). During the interview process the young men were asked to narrate their historicities by placing emphasis on influential events which had impacted their life situations (e.g. attending a new school; joining a youth group). In so doing I was able to gain insight into the iterational centrality of association in the social formation and constitution of both individual and collective personhood.

3. Photo-voice:

All participants were given a 35mm Holga film camera and invited to document their everyday lives. Having worked as a photojournalist, I was well-equipped to brief them on how to use the cameras, conducting a series of technical workshops. I encouraged them to take pictures which ‘told their story’, thereby affording them ownership of the research process, whilst providing me with an otherwise unattainable *emic* perspective. They were given a week to finish each roll of film (27 frames), with Sunday meetings reserved for the collection of completed films. These films were then scanned into JPEG’s and made available for photo-elicitation and critical dialogue. The young men’s photographic choices regarding what to include in the frame provided me not only with visual data, but with data chosen and subjected to a process of analysis for its significance to the young men themselves (Langevang, 2007). Through this rich data, which afforded me insight into *emic* perceptions of spatial terrains, networks and socio-spatial practices, I was able to redress the pitfalls associated with the *etic* representation of the perceptions of one’s research participants (Dodman, 2003; *ibid*). The process was not without complication however, as I found film to be a largely impractical data medium. Apart from its high cost, its ‘no margin for error’ nature (i.e. its reliance on an accurate ISO, aperture and shutter-speed nexus) meant that potentially valuable data was often lost.

2.7 Conclusion:

In emphasising that my fieldwork is partial, I acknowledge the effect of positionality on the production of knowledge, as well as the relevance of the social, political and temporal contexts in which the fieldwork takes place (Greyling, 2012). During my fieldwork I was able to gain insight into participants’ subjective meanings and perceptions (i.e. as an insider) while maintaining a figurative distance (i.e. as an outsider). By undertaking ‘deep hanging out’ within their youth milieu, I was afforded the opportunity to access circulating discourses on youth transitions, as well as piece together an ethnographic representation of the multiple perspectives of their expressions and experiences (Fokwang, 2008). I therefore acknowledge my lack of objectivity, because: (1) to recognise specific and personal locations is to acknowledge the limits of one’s domain from these positions (*ibid*); and (2) because

from specific positions all understanding becomes subjectively formed through the interplay within fields of power relations (Narayan 1993 cited in *ibid*: 41).

In this chapter, I have reflected on the multi-method design I used to probe my research questions around association and the navigation of youth. Whilst there has been a tendency in youth studies to portray ‘youth’ as a predetermined transition to adulthood, I have approached youth as both social *being* and social *becoming* – as a position in movement, seeing Brothers of the Cape members as both positioned and positioning themselves in society, actively navigating in a perpetually moving social landscape (Christiansen et al, 2006). In this regard ‘youth’ is seen as fluid, varying over space and time (Langevang, 2007). Thus, in order to capture the multiple temporal orientations and geographies of young people one requires a multi-method approach which enables the participants to freely express themselves by providing them with outlets to candidly convey the complexities of their everyday lives (Leyshon, 2002; *ibid*). By using the aforementioned multi-method approach I was able to capture the diversity and intricacy of these young men’s experiences in the present as well as longitudinal processes of transition (Langevang, 2007).

Chapter 3: Association and the Social Constitution of Personhood:

3.1 Abstract:

This chapter examines the centrality of association in the social formation and constitution of both individual and collective personhood. It especially addresses the place of association in the navigation of youth, and the scripting of identities, particularly within the city. The chapter engages with the ways in which young men generate, claim and legitimate respectable adulthood through various encounters and associations with various groups of people. The chapter demonstrates how in order to become; young men must straddle different temporal identities, play out different roles and shift across contrasting moral positions. Given this, the accomplished young man then is not necessarily one who adopts and displays high moral purity, but rather a *bricoleur* who strategically displays subjective inventiveness – that is, swiftly adapting to different situations. Building on the biographies and life trajectories of two Brothers of the Cape members, the chapter examines how both of them seek to accumulate prestige and respect by continually repositioning themselves across different groups and social contexts. By so doing, the chapter attempts to lay a framework for understanding the significance of viewing Brothers of the Cape as one of many temporary but integral platforms in their attempts to generate stability, and gain visibility amidst precariousness. Located at the margins of the city, as in the case of Cape Town where they are excluded both geographically and economically, collective socialisation (e.g. institutions, schools, hip-hop groups, school yard groups, soccer clubs) becomes a valuable strategy to reposition the self across different prestige positions.

3.2 Biography of Indigenous:

3.2.1 The precariousness of life:

Indigenous was born into a life of precarity somewhat anomalously in the former white-only suburb of Kenilworth in Cape Town. Due to his grandmother's live-in position as a domestic worker for a white family, it was here in the assigned servant's quarters that he initially resided. His early years were characterised by sporadic

moving within the city's racialised zones until he 'settled' in the township of Crossroads. Due to the area's 'emergency camp' status, championed by the Black Sash community campaign and legitimated by local judiciary, the settlement was initially given legal status and immunised against the tumultuous forced removals which occurred in the wake of the Soweto Uprising of 1976.

However his time in Crossroads coincided with a violent community schism brought about by the apartheid regime's clandestine use of contra-mobilisation in which surrogate forces led by government-aligned (and acting head of the residents committee) Johnson Ngxobongwana, sought to viciously quash local insurgency. In 1986 as this violence came to a head with the onset of mass riots, he and his family were forcibly removed from their home and relocated to nearby Khayelitsha. It was here that he recalls sweeping the sand from his home (the same wretched sand that served the State so conveniently in its concealment of the township from the national motorway) and moving on with life. Sharing a bed with his mother and grandmother, this space became the nucleus of his spatial navigations as he charted an aspirant trajectory through the youth landscape.

The absence of his father, who had abandoned his mother during pregnancy, was constantly reified during vehement tirades by his grandmother. Amidst severe financial precarity, Indigenious would be dragged by his mother to nearby Nyanga where she would use him as a means to beg his father for child support payments. These confrontations often turned physical, in one instance resulting in him and his mother being arrested and spending a night in jail. Thus the early years of his life were formed and forged by stories of abandonment: both by his father and by the state.

3.2.2 A new beginning:

After completing a year at the local school, his grandmother's employer paid for him to attend Rosmead Primary, a middle-class school located outside of the townships. He revelled in the novelty of riding the bus each morning, donning his distinctive tie, grey shorts and polished *Toughees*¹³; symbols which set him apart from other children

¹³ Toughees are a prominent brand of school shoe in South Africa.

in Khayelitsha. At the new school he had to adjust to the social mores and expectations of his unfamiliar environment. This included being taught in “the white-man’s language”, as opposed to his mother tongue, isiXhosa. By strategically adopting his so-called ‘Coloured’¹⁴ teacher’s dialect he was able to gain acceptance and position himself favourably in the classroom.

Embracing the challenges of his new spatial terrain, he went about cultivating his English speaking proficiency, studiously practicing with his grandmother each evening in an attempt to excel in the classroom. Now somewhat betwixt and between however, the daily transition from ‘black’ township to middle-class ‘Coloured’ suburbia and back again, resulted in exclusion from his township peers who labelled him “*Cheeseboy*” (i.e. colloquial slang for a middle-class black South African) and “bourgeois kid”. He was bullied in the street, and as such opted to seek solace within the confines of his home during the late afternoon.

This situation was largely ameliorated when he decided to join a local youth association run by a woman in his community. At Khaya Kids, members competed in *Isicanthulo* (i.e. gumboot dancing) competitions, a dance originally performed by black South African miners during apartheid. His natural adeptness towards such dancing engendered much admiration and respect from other children in the association. Through these dance competitions with rival associations, as well as through the enforcement of a strict moral code, Khaya Kids fostered a collective identity which created a sense of belonging. In speaking about such alleviation of social exclusion, he says “We looked after each other there, there was a brotherhood. There was a sense of belonging, it shaped us”.

The association was integral to the production of discipline and decency. Members were not permitted to enter the association’s premises unless they had attended school, completed their homework, and acted “appropriately” that day. This was enforced through stringent interaction between the Khaya Kids owner and the parents of the child. He says, “She (the owner) made sure she went round our parents checking that we had been good kids. So if I’m doing wrong at home, she’s going to find out about

¹⁴ In South Africa ‘Coloured’ is the name given to an ethnic group composed of persons primarily of mixed race origins.

it”. By adopting the values inculcated within his school environment, he was able to position himself favourably within the youth association, thereby maintaining social networks whilst reaffirming his decency (by way of association) in the eyes of his grandmother. He says, “The same things I learnt in school I brought them and applied them, we started drawing each other away from activities such as smoking a cigarette or smoking benzene. She (i.e. his grandmother) was proud about it”.

3.2.3 Of role models and good citizens:

In his senior years at Rosmead Primary he joined a youth association known as The Citizens set up by a prominent ANC-affiliated community member. He explains how the man was a role model to the children in the area, stating “He was one father we looked up to in our street because he worked in a good place, his children had bicycles, and he had a posh home. We were looking at how that family were conducting themselves and we were just mimicking”. The Citizens constructed their identity around notions of civic participation and moral purity. However membership was predicated not only on a moral cleanliness, but also on a corporeal cleanliness, with members being required to bathe before participating in any recreational activities. His self-positioning as a proud member of The Citizens was prompted by a yearning for respectability. Explaining his reason for joining he says “It was because of the man, his prestige. If he called a meeting, people came in numbers, what came out of his mouth, people took very seriously”. In this regard, as part of The Citizens he was able to take advantage of the social capital inherent within to position himself as distinguished.

At the time of his involvement with The Citizens his neighbourhood of J-Section was a particularly precarious space, “pinpointed as notorious for gang violence”. By seeking security within the association he constructed his masculinity in opposition to such hegemonic ‘violent masculinities’. In positioning himself as a respectable community member, he would diligently partake in the association’s hygiene campaigns, spending weekends cleaning the streets and picking up litter along the green belts. He says, “We had our small campaigns in the area where we would clean, on the weekend we would find a park and pick up a lot of papers”. By manoeuvring himself within such an associational network, he was also able to take advantage of

group interdependency to aid in the mitigation of financial precarity within his household. This was due to the creation of a small fund by members to ensure that there was always money for bread, should anyone's family ever be in need. In so doing, he was able to actualise himself as a bit-part economic contributor in the eyes of his family.

After completing primary school, and still funded by his grandmother's employer, he was enrolled at Oaklands High in the predominantly 'Coloured' community of Landsdowne. Having strived to gain acceptance to the "posh" Livingstone High where many of his Rosmead classmates had moved to, his insufficient grades meant he was sent to the "rowdy school" of Oaklands. It was within this rambunctious environment, where playground security was key, that he discarded the refined 'gentleman-like' persona used within the context of The Citizens, and adopted a more crude masculinity based on physical prowess. Speaking about his group of schoolyard friends, he says "We were the rowdy kids. Fists became something I could use, you couldn't touch us". In this sense he adopted a utilitarian approach to his respective environments, always seeking to maximise his accumulation of social capital, and thus increase his chances of gaining visibility and recognition. This required an understanding of the unwritten codes of each space, as he shifted across different moral positions in order to be respected. As such, it was sometimes good to be bad.

3.2.4 Performance and visibility:

During his weekends in Khayelitsha, he would routinely attend a musical talent show called Groovy Corner. It was essentially a platform for local township youth to perform on stage and compete for attention. He took part in these 'battles' along with his friends 'Synchronise' and Mbulelo, until they decided to merge and form a collective to better their chances of respect and recognition. Their group, which they called Skunk Squad (in reference to their use of marijuana), was one of a myriad of other such youth groups who competed for this valuable social capital. Armed with his newly cultivated linguistic repertoire, he would rap in English despite the crowd being predominantly Xhosa speaking youths. He modelled his sense of style on an

expected hip-hop image, donning baggy jeans and Dr Martens¹⁵ in what he refers to as “the longing and the identification of saying I’m hip hop too”. The group’s performance embodied quintessential rap posturing as he and his friends would “mimic what Americans were doing”. By copying these foreign rap artists he was able to imagine himself as eminent, in so doing temporarily liberating himself from the constraints of the township. As he says, “We actually escaped away from here”.

Besides the platform provided by Groovy Corner, he would actively seek out new platforms from which to be seen and heard. He doggedly ‘worked’ township spaces, pleading with organisers of local youth gatherings (e.g. ‘Miss Khayelitsha’, and ‘Miss Fresh Head’) to allow him to perform on stage. As a form of actualising himself as an established social adult, he would routinely perform at a veteran association in an “upper class” region of Khayelitsha, where working professionals convened socially. When his group Skunk Squad eventually dissipated, he immediately went on to form a similar group called What The Heck, which was later renamed Trup Fellowship after the inclusion of his friend ‘Metabolism’. Within a society that had no place for him due to the vestigial remnants of the apartheid regime, these groups provided him with a collective identity with which to accrue social capital and achieve respectability. His perpetual involvement in associational (or group) life illustrates how he was able to thicken his aspirational nodes and increase his potential to become.

3.2.5 Of Cambridge scholars and kasi boys:

After two years at Oaklands High, and still supported financially by his grandmother’s employer, he was granted admission to Cambridge College, a prestigious institution situated in a nearby area. The macho persona he had relied on at Oaklands High was known to various Cambridge College scholars who remembered his brash physicality from the morning bus commutes, and expected him to act in a similar manner. However he realised the need to adapt to the new spatial context, seeing the institutional as fraught with opportunity. He says, “My two fists were no longer my tool now, they were useless at Cambridge. The young people at Cambridge knew my reputation; we had been jumping in the same bus. Before you

¹⁵ A prominent brand of shoes.

get to Lansdowne you have to go to Cambridge where they would get off. Some of them knew me and some of them wanted that rowdy child. So here I am trying to start a new beginning, a new clean slate”. As such he had to once again delve into his self-formative repertoire and fashion a new ‘style of self’ as an adaptive strategy to maximise his potential within this new environment.

He embraced this environment with youthful vigour, viewing it as an opportunity to expand his aspirational mappings. He says, “I wanted to be part of that world. I was curious about the lifestyles these young males were living in the city...their moms drive the car when they bring them here. I have to jump on a bus. I have to organise myself”. The lack of school uniform, given his precarious financial situation, became an area of tactical negotiation. Being expected to have a new outfit each day, he convinced his grandmother to buy him a pair of jeans which he could wear with alternating t-shirts. Explaining this desire to be accepted he says, “The only reason I did that is because I couldn’t afford the fancy clothes the other kids were wearing and I didn’t want to look the odd child”.

During his time at Cambridge College he wanted to maintain his township networks while simultaneously positioning himself favourably within his new school environment. He did so by embodying his *kasi* (i.e. township) persona on the morning commute from Khayelitsha, but adjusting his personality and bodily discipline once inside the schoolyard. He says “This is how I survived at school. I had two groups of people. I had a crew that I jumped in the bus with to maintain the kasi ideas. I didn’t want to be seen as snobby so I mixed with them on the bus to keep that masculine side. (But) when I got to class I hung with the ‘brains’. I wanted to learn from them”. In this regard he was able to engage with his various spatial terrains, exercising inventiveness to embody various self-formative personas as an adaptive strategy to maximise the possibility of respect.

His position amongst the so-called ‘brains’ helped him academically, and he spent his break times studying with them in the classroom. Through this dedication he positioned himself favourably with his teachers who came to view him as a “serious” student, worthy of their additional support. He says, “Once they (i.e. the teachers) saw that you were someone who was striving, they would support you”. However this new

social positioning amongst the 'brains' was tested as a notoriously ill-disciplined classmate named Sheppard tried to coax him into his schoolyard group. Sheppard was drawn to his '*kasi* street-credibility' and wanted to enhance his own status through association with him. He says, "Sheppard was looking for prestige. He wanted to be around me for that". Coming from a particularly wealthy family, Sheppard maintained a high level of popularity due to his ostentatious displays of conspicuous consumption, something which piqued Indigenous' interest. This resulted in him eventually becoming a part of Sheppard's group, as his 'right-hand man'. As such he reaped the benefits of popularity and the status as gatekeeper to the group. He says, "All the girls wanted to be with us. But all these girls or these other guys, for them to get through (i.e. into the group), they had to talk to me because Sheppard was taking my word".

This newfound popularity and status left him momentarily playing out a self-formative duality, a delicate balancing act within the confines of the school premises. He says "I'm trying to change here, but I can't tell these guys. I had to play along amongst them". This duplicity was short-lived however, as he was pressed to act decisively on his prospective future. He had bunked school with Sheppard's group and gone to the upmarket shopping mall of Cavendish Square in Claremont, where Sheppard had bought everyone their own bottle of whisky. It was within this pivotal moment that he chose to relinquish the *kasi* persona he had strategically embodied within Sheppard's group, and align himself solely with the 'brains'.

This ability to adapt and play out various identities was dependent on his ability to read each space and perform the role he believed would maximise his potential for social capital. By joining the 'brains' he was able to connect his dreams of an alternative future to a plausible means of attaining them. He says, "What they were desiring about in their world, it was new. I wanted to be part of that world. I wanted to explore that world. It had promise for the future for a young man who came from a poor working class area". Thus the joining of this group, like other more formalised groups in his past, was an example of how he immersed himself in spatial networks which increased his capacity to aspire by creating imaginative pathways towards the aspirations of respectability and personhood.

3.2.6 Intellectual Seeds:

Back in Khayelitsha he went about merging Trup Fellowship with another group to create an association known as Intellectual Seeds. He traded the overtly braggadocios nature of his previous adolescent performances for a more subtle expression of self, cultivating an identity as a social commentary who would rap about social ills such as gangsterism and alcoholism. As before, the group would actively seek out platforms to be seen and heard within the community. In so doing they positioned themselves as respectable young men. He says, “We wanted people to see that we were young men who didn’t have an interest in joining gangs, who didn’t have an interest in doing drugs or alcohol”. This meant a renouncement of the marijuana he had smoked as an identity marker within Skunk Squad.

Born on the margins of society in a precarious state of being, he was able to use Intellectual Seeds as a means to etch out visibility and position himself as accomplished. As he says, “We were longing for a place of being acknowledged in our community”. Playing on the analogy of the N1 highway which links the townships to the city as a metaphor for his aspirational fulfilment of respectability and personhood, he says “It’s not the N1 alone to get there. There are many choices...We don’t all need to become part of a gang, we don’t need to steal cars”. Positioning themselves as a moral collective, the group were able to lay claim to social adulthood by attaching themselves to practises seen to engender respectability. He says, “We had principles amongst ourselves. We didn’t allow ourselves to be drinkers. Whatever we knew to be harmful we didn’t want to be a part of. We wanted to be dignified...We wanted to be proud of ourselves”. He thrived off this newfound respect, revelling in any inkling of community acknowledgement of his role as moral vanguard. He says, “The respect we got from the fellow youth its ‘you guys are doing something totally different in the community, wow you guys!’ ...I loved that respect honestly where people were starting to acknowledge what we were doing”. This proved to be a way of fulfilling notions of otherwise unattainable personhood. As he says, “It was an internal struggle of the politics of us first, of finding identity, dignity, pride”.

After completing his education, he was unable to find formal employment. He says, “I never knew that I’d serve unemployment, that didn’t ring a bell in my mind”. With his imaginations and hopes tempered by the realities of the situation, he set about establishing his own roof cleaning service in Khayelitsha as a means of ‘getting by’. Despite any aspirational shortcomings, his life history illustrates how the thickening of the nodes inherent in his past came about due to his agentive role in forging a future amidst precarity, ‘working spatial terrains and networks’ (Fataar, 2010) to his advantage, and thus attempting to take control of his own destiny.

3.3 Biography of Khusta:

3.3.1 Association as stability:

Like Indigenous, Khusta was born into a life of precarity in the township of Langa. He too was abandoned by his father at birth, and his early years were spent itinerantly moving within the Cape Flats, first to Gugulethu and then to Khayelitsha. It was here in Khayelitsha that he settled with his mother, and found a certain degree of stability. However one day on the playground he was kidnapped by his estranged father and taken to live in the rural Transkei. A year later his mother was able to covertly bring him back to Cape Town, and they secretively relocated to the township of New Crossroads.

It was in New Crossroads at the age of seven that he joined a community youth group called *Intshthwuna*. Apart from praise singing and poetry, the group of children would practise traditional Xhosa dancing and partake in competitions between rival groups in the neighbourhood. This bared a significant resemblance to Indigenous’ early involvement with Khaya Kids. At the same time as his involvement with *Intshthwuna*, he joined a politically-charged association known as ‘The No Name Group’. Run by an elderly woman in his street, members would convene regularly to re-enact scenes from the musical ‘Sarafina!’ which recounted the role of youth activism in the 1976 Soweto Riots. In his free afternoon, in-between juggling attendance at these two groups, he joined a ballet-dancing club. This meant that he was involved in group activities every day of the week.

However his ballet-dancing identity was at odds with the hegemonic masculinity displayed by his neighbourhood friends who ridiculed him saying “We don’t go around with ‘moffies’ (i.e. homosexuals)”. As such he discarded the gentle (allegedly ‘effeminate’) persona used within the context of his ballet-dancing club and adopted a tough culturally normative ideal of masculinity when playing in the street. In his free time, he and his neighbourhood friends would attend the local talent shows, idolising the top performers. He says, “We looked up to them, the likes of Hobbit, Bob, DJ Ninja, the Non Stop Ghetto DJ’s, and Old Jives. We’d go to their gigs and watch them singing, and in our own street we would mimic them and sing their songs, claiming them to be our own”.

3.3.2 The X-Boys:

When he was thirteen, a gang war broke out in his neighbourhood between the Zulu’s from New Crossroads and the Dog Pound Gang from Gugulethu. His school was situated at the nexus of the melee, leading to a fellow pupil being shot in the crossfire. This resulted in his mother sending him to live with his aunt in nearby Khayelitsha. His reluctant withdrawal from associational life in New Crossroads saw him form a ‘crew’ upon his arrival in his new location. He, along with three other youths, started a group called the X-Boys, modelling their collective identity around *Pantsula* urban dance culture. *Pantsula* was a 1960’s political dance borne out of the apartheid struggle as an expression of black resistance, and he and his friends appropriated this identity, tirelessly practicing their dance routines on the dusty street corner near his home. Wearing matching suits, as per *Pantsula* tradition, they were able to define their social distinctiveness, building on *Pantsula*’s corporeal codes of imagination to reclaim power within their precarious state of being. Their adoption of the *Pantsula* uniform was however reconfigured from its traditional template, seeing them substitute polished shoes for Converse sneakers in a process of syncretism and blending of political historicities and contemporary urban fashion.

As was the case with Indigenous and his adolescent hip-hop groups, the X-Boys would actively seek out platforms to increase visibility and gain recognition. They too exhibited a dogged determination, appropriating public spaces and inscribing their collective presence into areas deemed to be the exclusive domain of adults. As Khusta

says, “We would hijack everything that we felt we could get exposure from, even if it was a promotion for mielie meal or Omo¹⁶. We would try and get our way in there saying ‘we’re this group of dancers and this is what we do’. It was all about wanting to expose ourselves”. The competition within these appropriated spaces was fierce however, with rival dance crews scrambling to perform whenever word of these ‘platforms’ spread throughout the neighbourhood. He says, “We would go there as a group of dancers and then we’d realise there’s another group there as well who also wants to dance. [So] then there’d be some kind of competition between the groups until a certain group had been chosen as the best group of dancers”. Through these competitive group performances he was able to reposition himself as an eminent member of the community.

Thriving on this recognition, he would spend hours practising choreographed dance moves in anticipation of the next ‘battle’. Eventually these campaigns of exposure were intensified, as he and his friends would frequent local *shabeens* to perform for patrons. He says, “We started wanting to expose ourselves more, going into *shabeens* where there was a juke box, and then we would meet there and there’d be crews from different sections...We’d start competing with one another, and there’d be people that were drinking and watching as we’d battle”. As an impoverished youth living in a corrugated-iron shack, these ‘battles’ within such ‘novel hierarchies of being’ (Fuh, 2009) aided in his aspirational notions of ‘becoming’ through the accumulation of valuable social capital in the form of prestige.

3.3.3 Shifting across moral positions:

In high school, following the dissolution of the X-Boys, he joined a youth association known as the PPASA. Located in a disused shipping container, the PPASA (i.e. Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa) were a group of local youths who positioned themselves as “agents of change”, and went about educating fellow youth in the community about teen pregnancy, HIV, and substance abuse. Khusta would routinely partake in their neighbourhood campaigns, seeing himself as someone who was “playing an influential role in influencing others positively and helping them

¹⁶ Omo is a brand of washing powder.

overcome social ills”. By attempting to influence others positively, he engaged in moral practices which served to ratify his aspirations towards the attainment of social adulthood.

Whilst an active member of the PPASA he went about forming a new performance group known as the Cool Boys Crew. Unlike his previously appropriated *Pantsula* identity, the Cool Boys Crew saw themselves as rap artists, similarly subverting the real and reconstructing the self. Much like his earlier efforts with the X-Boys, he and his new crew established a reputation for gate-crashing formal events in which they could gain exposure. They would attend any event which had a sound system and an audience, even if that event was as unrelated to their habitus as an elderly choir competition. He says, “Sometimes there would be competitions like a choir, we would enter there and register our name and want to perform. Some of the events were not relevant for us to go there, it was different kinds of things like different genres, but we would go there and insist on performing because what was important was just for us to get exposure”. This ‘snatch and grab’ opportunism and its ensuing impact on his reputation, was yet another example of his attempts to reposition himself as accomplished.

Being a member of two groups, he found himself having to juggle two identities. As an “agent of change” within the PPASA he cultivated a “moral driven identity”, tailoring his personality and bodily discipline in accordance. However as a member of the Cool Boys Crew he modelled his identity around gangster-rapper Tupac Shakur, copying his style and adopting a similar ‘bad boy’ attitude (leading to him being nicknamed ‘Tupac’ by his fellow crew members). This ‘bad boy’ persona was antithetical to his ‘squeaky clean’ identity as a moral vanguard. He says, “The character I was portraying as an artist was more of a gangster, rapper role. At PPASA I was more of a mentor to my peers, a more focused kind of a character, more moral driven”. This illustrates how he was able to straddle different temporal identities, playing out different roles and shifting across contrasting moral positions. As he says, “I had these two identities. I was naughty to be honest; I was mischievous. While on the other side I was still pretending”.

3.3.4 Novel hierarchies of being:

During his senior years in high school, the Cool Boys Crew gained new members and became known as the Golden Crew. Shortly thereafter they held talks with two other crews (namely Ghetto Grown and Joop de Loop) regarding a potential merger. The protracted negotiations took place over a series of meetings, with each crew initially refusing to budge on the issue of name change. Eventually settling on the amalgam ‘Golden Ghetto Grown’, his new crew set about fiercely competing in local talent shows. After a 3rd place finish in Radio Zibonele’s annual competition they entered a talent show at the prestigious Tygerberg Festival, spending weeks practicing in anticipation of the coveted moment when “the crowd like what you’re doing”. In this regard the crowd were not simply spectators, but ‘spec-actors’ central to the ratification of prestige.

The winning crews from the talent show were to be given the opportunity to perform as the opening acts for Mdu Masilela, a local *Kwaito*¹⁷ ‘popstar’. So whilst the Festival was essentially celebrating Mdu Masilela and fellow established artists, it was the frantic competition within the accompanying talent show that became the ‘be all and end all’ for these crews who battled for a sliver of stage and the associated spoils of recognition and prestige. His crew was unfortunately not included in the winners, but did finish one tier below, ensuring them the right to “open for the openers”. He says, “It was quite an achievement, but we weren’t satisfied. There was an upper level compared to us”. He longed to be positioned further up the hierarchy, in the same tier as such respected crews as Maniac Squad, United Flow and Collided Crew. Through participation in this constructed hierarchy he was able to increase his capacity to aspire, visualising linkages between association (and the performance therein) and the attainment of social capital.

The following year, the SABC (i.e. South African Broadcasting Corporation) announced that it would be running a talent show in Langa, Nyanga and Khayelitsha, with the top crews from each township competing in a televised final. The final was scheduled to be held outside of the Cape Flats (in the town of Atlantis), with chosen

¹⁷ Kwaito is a genre of South African music incorporating performance and fashion.

finalists being transported there via bus. Khusta and his crew saw this as a major opportunity to climb the hierarchy and establish themselves as an eminent group. They participated in the preliminary Khayelitsha leg, and much to their elation, qualified for the final. He says, “We got a call telling us we had a space on the bus, we were excited going back to Makhaza (a district of Khayelitsha) we didn’t even feel the hardness of the road (during the 2hr walk home) because we were so excited. We killed it, we were called in the top three meaning we were good! We just could not wait for the next Saturday to get on that bus”.

The following Saturday they filed into the pre-arranged transport and took their seats amongst the other crews, basking in the distinction of being chauffeured to a performance. Khusta was nervous however, and aware of his crew’s lower-rung position in relation to the other “superstars” on board. He says, “We could see we were isolated on this bus, we were the ones that were not known”. However despite this, a fellow crew member, in a show of bravado somewhat akin to a medieval jousting herald, stood on his seat and proclaimed Golden Ghetto Grown to be the best crew on the bus. This was met with a torrent of abuse from the other crews who collectively mocked them, urging them to prove it on stage. As such, when it came their time to perform in the final they were greeted by a sea of scrutiny. However despite this pressure they excelled in their performance, in so doing winning the respect of all the other crews. He says, “The crowd went crazy! Again! We nailed it once again! When we were going back (on the bus) people were approaching us saying ‘damn you guys are good, ‘where are you guys from?’. We got respect from them!”.

3.3.5 Institutions of prestige:

In his final year at school he focused diligently on his academics, desperately wanting to pursue tertiary education. He says “I was now playing the role of an academic”. However having obtained the required grades, he was initially unable to enrol due to his dire economic situation. This precariousness was further exacerbated by the death of his mother. Yet despite these setbacks he persevered, working multiple jobs to save money for university. He says “We buried her. Life continued. I saved money because I desperately wanted to go to school”. This resilience eventually saw him able to enrol

at CPUT (i.e. Cape Peninsula University of Technology) in Belleville, studying retail business management. Living with seven others on the floor of his aunt's shack, he would commute to the middle-class neighbourhood of Bellville each day, arriving back late at night. He embraced his new spatial terrain with optimism, adjusting his persona and bodily discipline in accordance with the expectations of the new surroundings. Speaking about this reinvention of the self he says, "The way that I acted was different because I was a completely new person". On weekends however, he participated as an active member of his new crew, the Lyrical Philosophers, thereby maintaining his involvement in township talent shows.

During his second year at CPUT his savings started to dwindle, placing strain on his academic life. He would go an entire day without food, and was unable to purchase the required textbooks for his classes (resorting to photocopying chapters in the library each week). He eventually ran out of bus fare, deciding to squat illegally in the CPUT residence. On weekends he would sneak onto the train to Khayelitsha and beg for food for the week ahead. Explaining his predicament he says, "I had to photocopy. I had to scavenge for food. I became a squatter at the res. Every Friday I had to find a way to get the late train when there was no security at the station in order for me to get to Khayelitsha. When I got to Khayelitsha I'd have my sports bag with me, and I'd go to these different houses where I knew there'd be people that might spare me some potatoes or maybe two cups of rice". Over time this situation took its toll on his physical and mental health. Emaciated and teetering on the brink of psychological breakdown, he eventually found himself unable to continue and returned back to the townships. Despite any shortcomings, this retrospective narrative illustrates how Khusta utilised his agency to increase his capacity to aspire, working spatial terrains and networks to maximise his potential to become.

3.4 Conclusion:

In this chapter I have built on the biographies of Indigenous and Khusta to examine the centrality of association in the social formation and constitution of both individual and collective personhood. I have especially addressed the place of association in the navigation of youth, and the scripting of identities within the city. In so doing, I have demonstrated how in order to become; young men must straddle different temporal

identities, play out different roles and shift across contrasting moral positions. Furthermore, this chapter has illustrated the ways in which young people located on the margins of the city use membership to associations, and the activities within, to make claims to specific forms of social adulthood which are related to, facilitated by, and activated by ideas of a collective 'Struggle'. This 'Struggle' is a concrete yet ambiguous concept with a double-edged meaning. On the one hand it represents the everyday struggles which define life in townships such as Khayelitsha; whilst on the other hand it is used concurrently to represent the political struggle against apartheid (i.e. against government; inequality; and capitalism). In the next chapter I continue this conversation by examining how Brothers of the Cape as a collective 'social movement' strategically build upon these ideas of 'Struggle' to market a particular kind of collective accomplishment, legitimate themselves as accomplished, and lay claim to social adulthood.

Chapter 4: Hip-hop and becoming:

4.1 Abstract:

This chapter focuses on Brothers of the Cape as a revolutionary ‘social movement’. It addresses how they appropriate ideas of the ‘Struggle’ crafted during apartheid, both to perform and lay claim to respectable social adulthood. This ‘culture of struggle’ meshes seamlessly with the motif of political consciousness inherent in African hip-hop to legitimate their personas as conscious hip-hop artists. By establishing themselves as players within Khayelitsha’s field of conscious hip-hop, they are afforded access to a certain ‘novel hierarchy of being’ (Fuh, 2012). It is within this field of competition that they are able to position themselves as eminent social actors by acquiring valuable social capital (i.e. in the form of consecration and valorisation) through strategic performances of ritual and repertoire. For these young men, this platform of incarnation serves to replace ‘old predictabilities’ (Furlong, 2000), providing a new context for social mobility; as well as new possibilities for the attainment of respectable adulthood. Thus by presenting a detailed ethnographic description of this theatre of sociability in which Brothers of the Cape enact their incarnation of eminence, this chapter provides a discussion on associational life and the role it plays in the social fantasies and possibilities of youth in precarious environments.

4.2 Conscious hip-hop on the Cape Flats:

Firstly to contextualise, ‘hip-hop activism’ on the Cape Flats can be traced back to the 1980’s, where it was borne out of opposition to a malignant apartheid state. Groups such as Black Noise and Prophets of da City created critical spaces for disenfranchised youth to access the public sphere and engage with oppositional political ideologies. During this time, hip hop used its engagement with identity, politics and history to oppose neo-colonial discourse, reconfigure hegemonic representations of ‘blackness’, and raise critical consciousness (Haupt, 2008). In today’s democratic climate, hip hop activism continues to address oppression in the form of neo-liberalism and the lingering remnants of the apartheid regime. Brothers of the Cape are one such ‘subaltern counter-public’ (Fraser, 1992) located on the Cape

Flats who use hip hop as a tool for empowerment and the formation of new realms of citizenship. As will be discussed within this chapter, these cultural productions are based on spatial histories of commodification and contact in which the global and the local are reconfigured in local dispositions, meanings and identities, as these youth grapple with the city's political context in their engagement with social inequality (Hammett, 2010).

Whilst Habermas, in accordance with the idea of the public sphere being an intermediary between civil society and state, claims that a single public sphere is crucial to democratic functionality, and as such views the proliferation of a multiplicity of such competing publics as a hindrance to democracy, I however subscribe to the approach that these counter-publics, (in which members circulate counter-discourses to construct oppositional understandings of their interests and identities), emphasise how heterogeneity and parallel discursive arenas are in fact essential components of the democratic process (Habermas, 1989; Haupt, 2008). The community parks and recreational centres which are transformed into such parallel discursive arenas indicate how Khayelitsha is alive with collective formations that are facilitated by the very uncertainties incumbent within urban environments severely punctuated by fragmented infrastructures (Simone, 2008). These amphitheatres, emerging as the *lingua franca* of township youth, have been largely overlooked in current research into youth and political participation in post-apartheid South Africa. As discursive orchestras of the ghetto, the microphone becomes a conductor's baton in attempts to 'parlay culture into social justice' (Yúdice, 2001), dispelling myths about an apathetic youth culture, as hip-hop is used as a vehicle to voice frustration and mobilise activism.

As such, these youth have emerged as self-proclaimed spokesmen for their neighbourhood, transgressing established delineations of gerontocratic rights to public discourse (Fredericks, 2013). This claim is echoed in the work of Christensen and Utas (2008), who saw the usurpation of gerontocratic convention by way of popular music in Sierra Leone as a form of generational revolt (Shepler, 2010). The foundation of this form of music's power is its aesthetical sensibility which is able to integrate affective registers, facilitating agentive positionality and reconfigured political identities within a 'new discursive space' (Pieterse, 2010). This 'discursive

space’ comprises a rupture from established conventions of propriety in indirect comment – by way of an uncensored form of public moral critique, which is central to such youth ‘speaking out of turn’, so to speak (Fredericks, 2013).

The socio-economic strangulation experienced by such youth is indicative of a continental crisis of neoliberal reform in which African youth are increasingly excluded from the realms of work and power, struggling to attain notions of respectable adulthood as they are relegated to the margins of society. Fredericks (2013), in her acknowledgement of youth as a social category bound by spatial circumscriptions, claims that as such, generational struggle by African youth is inscribed in the rooting of contention in the creation of transgressive spatialities (both abstract and actualised) particularly in the context of new globalised geographies of identity. In this chapter I examine how it is within these ‘reformed spaces of youth’, as a result of globalising forces (ibid), that popular music such as hip-hop has emerged to: (1) foster political critique; (2) construct ‘novel hierarchies of being’ (Fuh, 2012) which provide new contexts for social mobility; and (3) facilitate new avenues of citizenship.

4.3 Fields of play and competition:

I conceive of Khayelitsha as comprising a plurality of social ‘fields’: arenas of play and competition, facilitating multiple games in which social agents compete for various forms of capital as a means of reconstructing the self (Bourdieu, 1986). It is within these arenas of play and competition that young men dispel the myth of themselves as non-agentive ‘societal flotsam’ (Barnett, 2009), intentionally acting within the contexts in which they find themselves rather than simply being acted upon. The field of conscious hip-hop is one such arena in which young men are able to reconstruct the self and position themselves as respectable social adults.

Alluding to the aforementioned plurality of social fields, Indigenous claims that “The working class black people [of Khayelitsha] have created divisions amongst themselves”. His use of the word ‘divisions’ references the various distinctive spaces of sociability which exist, and the games one can play within them to position oneself as accomplished. These ‘divisions’ are evident, for example, in *Brothers of the Cape’s*

collective berating of youth groups in Khayelitsha who use displays of conspicuous consumption to lay claim to eminence. I am privy to such chiding in the wake of Brothers of the Cape being denied access to a prominent nightclub in 'Site C' one Friday night. Venting his frustration, Indigenous shouts "Fuck the bouncers, this is bourgeois shit!". Biko, visibly irate, informs me that the club "Has a problem with Brothers of the Cape because when you come to their space they expect you to act up to a certain vibe". Mawethu clarifies what Biko means by 'a certain vibe' in explaining that "The tag of a brand name shows who you are". Zanzolo adds that you must make a grand entrance, "Coming in with two ladies wearing short skirts and buying the most expensive stuff there". Indigenous explains that the players in the upper echelons of this 'hierarchy of being' (Fuh, 2012) frequent the "VIP side where everyone chills in crews and drinks Chivas Regal".

Mawethu is quick to highlight that these youth groups are "From the gutter and don't have money to pay for groceries at home", but partake in the charade as a means of insinuating themselves into positions of eminence. Whilst the logic of the game within this particular field is governed by conspicuous consumption, Khayelitsha's conscious hip-hop field is governed by its own distinctive logic. In the next section I will discuss this, examining how Brothers of the Cape draw on notions of consecration and valorisation in their attempts to position themselves favourably within this field.

4.4 The field of conscious hip-hop:

The concept of 'field' which is used throughout this dissertation is derived from Bourdieu's (1993) postulation that agents (e.g. Brothers of the Cape members) do not exist in a vacuum, but are instead bound up in complex 'social situations' which are determined by objective social relations. It is these 'social situations' which Bourdieu accounts for in his development of the concept of 'field'. Within the field, players compete for available resources, and whereas for example in the field of economics, players would compete for economic capital, in Khayelitsha's field of conscious hip-hop – which is a cultural field – players compete for symbolic capital (i.e. prestige in the form of consecration and valorisation). Fields such as this, where authority hinges on symbolic capital, are referred to as 'sub-fields of restricted production', and are

diametrically opposed to the large-scale market. The symbolic capital within these fields is constructed on a dialectic of reconnaissance (i.e. recognition) and connaissance (i.e. knowledge).

This is where cultural capital plays a role, as it encompasses dispositions, competences and cultural knowledge (Bourdieu, 1993). For Brothers of the Cape members in the field, this cultural capital acts as an embodied code, form of knowledge and cognitive ability which enables them to competently acknowledge which hip-hop groups are worthy of consecration and valorisation. As such, a work of art (in this case the artistic nature of hip-hop) holds weight, interest and the potential for acclaim only for the players within that field in possession of the cultural capital (and hence embodied code) to decipher it. This concept of cultural capital is central to Bourdieu's (1984) *Distinction*, in which he argues that one's aesthetic choices are a product of class fractions which distinguish between societal classes. In this regard hip-hop as an 'art form' is seen to be consciously predisposed in its role in the legitimization of societal classes. Thornton (1996:10) emphasises this in her critique of cultural capital, which she refers to as "The linchpin of a system of distinction in which cultural hierarchies correspond to social ones and people's tastes are predominantly a marker of class". This emphasises how conscious hip-hop artists in Khayelitsha are able to create a sense of collective identity (i.e. people like us).

For prospective players to join Khayelitsha's field of conscious hip-hop, they must be in possession of a *habitus* which predisposes them to partake in the game (Bourdieu, 1993). The *habitus* is essentially the physical embodiment of one's cultural capital, as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them" (Bourdieu, 1990:53). In this regard, *habitus* is evident in the way a hip-hop artist, through his interaction, participation and performance, learns the dispositions and practices of the hip hop field, and thus in his ratification of the structuring structures, becomes part of the structuring structures, all of which comprise the appropriate social practice within the field as a whole (Johnson, 2006). As such, I frame my understanding of *habitus* with the acknowledgment of a

systematic social order which utilises the body's disposition to recall 'states of being' which are then reactivated through the body's ability to behave in specific ways on specific occasions (Bourdieu, 1990).

Taking this into account, hip-hop artists must possess a certain degree of skill and knowledge of the game's logic to be seen as legitimate players within the field. The hierarchy of positions within the field is mediated by the dispositions of the hip-hop artist, or what Bourdieu refers to as one's 'feel for the game'. His use of the word 'feel' essentially implies one's *habitus*. Thus the 'feel for the game' takes the form of mastery over a set of dispositions which are utilised to maximise one's position within the field's hierarchy. The entire game is premised on the collusion of hip-hop artists in what Bourdieu refers to as the *illusio*, which is the participation in the game based on the acceptance that due to its stakes, the game is worth playing (van Maanden, 2009). It is thus the root of the competition which pits artists/crews against each other and which facilitates the game itself (Bourdieu, 1996). The *illusio*, residing on the side of the hip-hop artist, is distinct from the *doxa* which is a set of undisputed assumptions, rules and beliefs which govern the field as a whole. Established self-evident assumptions represent the *doxic* acceptance of the field, due to the agreement of cognitive and objective structures (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). For example, *doxic* presuppositions within Khayelitsha's field of conscious hip-hop regard male dominance as the norm, and this *doxic* assumption (as a form of conformity and dogma) thus explains the distinct lack of female hip-hop artists within the field.

In summary, Khayelitsha's field of conscious hip-hop comprises a structure of interactions between positioned artists, based on various forms of capital, but also facilitated by a joint *illusio* and *doxa*, as these artists compete for symbolic capital in the form of prestige, taking up positions based on their *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1996; van Maanden, 2009). The field is thus based on power relations between hip-hop artists, with symbolic capital only being attainable if artists possess the necessary knowledge of the field's codes inherent within their *habitus* (ibid). Governing the competition within the field is an objective complicity, structured upon a common acceptance that due to its stakes, the game is worth playing.

4.5 Playing the game:

In this field, all players (generally ‘crews’) subscribe to a universal code which connects them to a global ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983) of ‘underground’ hip-hop artists advocating a vision as the voice of the oppressed. They mould their collective disposition around this multi-ethnic ‘nation’ with global scope, fluid capacity to traverse borders, and reluctance to subscribe to the geopolitical givens of the present (Alim 2009). Brothers of the Cape legitimise this transnational connectivity by grounding their own struggle in universal commonalities of racialised socio-political struggle. Indigenous alludes to this tacit transnational connectivity by drawing on American hip-hop artist Common’s lyrics regarding racialised struggle in the US, stating “He said that ‘I can’t tell you what freedom is, but I can tell you what freedom is not’. So we’ve (i.e. Brothers of the Cape as part of a global black imaginary) been raised in a society where we haven’t actually tasted and lived what freedom is. We’ve been on the other side of the fence”.

By subscribing to underground hip-hop’s global metanarrative as a site of protest and agitation, players within the field are required to repudiate ‘mainstream’ hip-hop and espouse the socio-political rhetoric of revered lyrical activists such as KRS-One and Common (Kellerer, 2013). In emulation of these American artists, lyrical delivery within the discursive space of the field is, in part, mediated by such transnational flows which dictate stylistic authenticity. Indigenous, in acknowledgment of the need to ‘play the game’ according to its rules, states “If I’m rapping I need to have an American twang. If I’m going to perform to a group of young people that are into the popular culture that is hip-hop, either in the townships or the city, if I don’t have that twang they won’t be convinced”.

This ability to convince is made possible by players’ capacity to strategically harmonise their dispositions with the expectations inscribed within that position. Yet this does not amount to mere mimicry, as players within Khayelitsha’s field of conscious hip-hop are required to both align themselves with the idiosyncrasies inherent in American hip-hop (e.g. the twang), while simultaneously infusing elements of their own culture into their local imagination and experience. This trans-cultural struggle for artistic authenticity is a delicate balance between continuity of

hegemonic norms, and the incorporation of local cultural elements (i.e. mores and language), as players attempt to establish a homology between disposition and field position.

This emergent field has been largely overlooked in popular conceptions of local hip-hop as being a predominantly ‘Coloured’ cultural form (see: Faber, 2004; Watkins, 2004; Haupt, 2008). The prevalent discourse on local conscious hip-hop’s engagement with oppositional political ideologies has thus tended to focus almost solely on so-called ‘Coloured’ collectives such as Black Noise, Prophets of da City and Heal the Hood. Indigenous emphasises this in stating “We [the Khayelitsha ‘conscious’ hip hop artists] have been evolving but there is nothing that has been written about the other side of the Cape Flats, of the Nguni people. There’s another rap that has grown in these communities. People have actually started seeing the importance of rapping in their indigenous languages. So how do you make the researchers that are in these institutions not see Heal the Hood as the only core foundation?”.

The use of Xhosa, Zulu and Shona vernacular is utilised within this field not to delineate bounded ethnic identities, but rather to reconstruct the self through socio-cultural aspects which emphasise the linguistic cultural identity and localised blend of hip hop which positions players as post-apartheid township rappers (Becker and Dastille, 2008). In rejecting exclusionary communalist ideals within their hybridised vernacular, these artists appropriate non-essentialist aspects of the African Renaissance and Pan-African ideology into their lyrics, thereby invoking an embracement of inclusive ‘African-ness’ (ibid). This is reiterated by Indigenous who says “Its time for us to connect to who we are as Africans, Africa has got to live in the mind”. However, this is of course ‘African-ness’ with a ‘twang’. Zanzolo emphasises this negotiation and reconfiguration of global cultural flows by explaining that “All the rappers wear their caps sideways and then that cap becomes a hip-hop cap. So we then fuse what we have from our own culture to that”.

Therefore, the field’s codes are not simply mimetic (of Western hegemonic norms), but require players to master the intricacies of a complex synthesis of the global and the local, encompassing stylistic ‘flow’, bodily aesthetics, and idiosyncratic

performance. Colloquialisms grounded in the lexicon of American hip-hop fuse with isiXhosa praise poetry¹⁸, Nike ‘starter caps’ are fashioned with the local ‘conscious’ brand *Aluta Continua* (Portuguese for ‘the struggle continues’), and quintessential rap posturing is intertwined with politically-charged *Toyitoyi*¹⁹ dancing. It is here that players exercise a ‘feel for the game’ as they harmonise their dispositions with the expectations inscribed within that position.

For example whereas Zanzolo, who names himself after an isiXhosa king, is able to captivate a local audience with totemic praise poetry recited in ethnic vernacular, it is done so with conscious inclusion of the expected hyper-masculine machismo which signifies ‘hip-hop masculinity as a discourse of hardness’ (Pardue, 2008). This is done, as he says, in the knowledge that “When you’re doing hip-hop there is still a certain image they are looking for”. So whilst Frantz Fanon’s call to “stop envying her (i.e. the West)”²⁰ is ostensibly imbued in the implicit rhetoric of the field, one still cannot overly bend hip-hop’s hegemonic template for fear of “being viewed as backwards”.

Knowledge of the seemingly trivial codes, such as the correct execution of a ‘solidarity’ clique handshake, the virtual ‘liking’ of particular Facebook pages, conspicuous allegiance towards various politicised sub-culture identity markers (e.g. Starter caps bearing the logo ‘Toyitoyi hip hop’), and the yelling of the appropriate appreciatory mantra (i.e. ‘Amandla!’²¹) during performances, all contribute to the *doxic* assumption of the malignance of the State – and a collective identity as a united front of oppositional vanguards. Yet whereas the logic of the field dictates the proverbial battle lines to be drawn between hip-hop artist (in the plural sense) and State, this serves only to legitimate an autonomous field of cultural production in which collusion over the *illusio* sees the real battle lines being drawn between the hip-hop artists themselves as they compete over the appraisal and authenticity of their particular ‘anti-state’ artistry.

¹⁸ “Praise poetry is central to any delineation of Southern African literature since praising is an important part of peoples’ political and literary expression. The genre of praise poetry called ‘izibongo’ in Zulu is a political art form found in Southern African societies like the Nguni speaking people” (Mphande, 2008:1)

¹⁹ Southern African dance expressing protest and defiance; commonly associated with the apartheid struggle. Zanzolo refers to his brand of hip-hop as ‘Toyitoyi hip-hop’.

²⁰ Quoted in promotion of the Redefining Africanism hip-hop festival in Khayelitsha.

²¹ Amandla means ‘power’ in isiXhosa and was widely used as an anti-apartheid rallying cry.

Appraisal (and the subsequent spoils of symbolic capital) is linked to authenticity, which is in turn linked to one's homology between disposition and field position, which requires a conscious degree of 'performativity' (Goffman, 1959) in order to convince the audience of such. By 'performativity', I refer to the employment of a form of conscious dramaturgy (i.e. theatrical performance) on the part of the hip-hop artist as a means of presenting oneself in strategic harmony with the expectations inscribed within that position. As Goffman (1959:20) posits, "When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be". This 'strength of self illusion' brings new meaning to the hip-hop philosophy of 'keeping it real'.

So to summarise, an artist is required to adopt an element of 'performativity' in establishing a homology between disposition and field position; this must include the ability to re-contextualise cultural forms by way of local appropriations of hip-hop's hegemonic cultural model, where we see both the continuity and reproduction of hegemonic norms (i.e. the global), as well as the integration of vernacular and traditional cultural praxis (i.e. the local). This homology between disposition and field position contributes to peer-based authenticity, which enables one to accumulate symbolic capital within one's artistic cachet. Yet this framework forms merely the basic *sine qua non* for potential hierarchical ascension within this particular 'sub-field of restricted production', and as will be unpacked within the following section, the real trump card lies in the gambit of distinction.

4.6 'Winning' the game:

Perhaps 'winning' is not the most accurate terminology in a context in which the dynamics of the positional flux does not, by implication, infer a 'loser'. Whereas I use the word as a canonical extension of Bourdieu's 'field of competition' metaphor, as well as to delineate the means for hierarchical ascendancy, I acknowledge its limitations due to my argument that members of associations (in this case hip hop crews) by means of simply partaking in 'the game', are able to increase their capacity

to aspire through the reconfiguration of how they are viewed - both by themselves and others - actively imagining and actualising an alternative future, thereby renouncing their terms of recognition and fixing broken trajectories. That caveat aside, in the context of this autonomous sub-field of restricted production, it is the symbolic capital within one's artistic cachet which determines the degree of consecration, and thus the potential for one's crew to be seen as the most eminent (i.e. 'winning' so to speak).

To unpack this notion of 'winning' within the context of Brothers of the Cape, it would be beneficial to first outline the basic framework which facilitates the group rituals, repertoires and performances drawn upon to amass symbolic capital within their artistic cachet. Fundamental (and perhaps axiomatic) to this framework, is that for Brothers of the Cape members the association (referred to in this context as the 'crew') fosters a sense of collective identity (i.e. "people like us"), which Indigenous emphasises in stating "We've found an element of building a family".

This collective identity is reinforced through indoctrinated principles which instil a specific way of thinking. Sipho affirms this in his claim that "There is a layer, a principle that we've created". This amounts to the creative and cognitive expression of a certain collective ontology. Prospective members must exhibit a bona fide commitment to adopt this collective ontology before gaining admission into the association. This is explained by Indigenous who says, "His (i.e. the prospective recruit's) commitment proves he is willing to learn". This process of 'learning' includes being versed in anarchism, local left-wing politics, Orwellian philosophy, and the hip-hop epistemology of 'keeping it real' within an Afro-centric pedagogy²². The prerequisite for members to be grounded in these specific socio-political and philosophical underpinnings is reiterated by Sipho who says, "If I bring someone (i.e. a new recruit) into the association it means I need to mentor that person, give him the right textbooks to read".

In this regard they view themselves as artistic philosophers, reminiscent of Kauffman's depiction of Nietzsche as "a Socrates who makes music – a philosopher who is also an artist" (McCabe, 2011:119). As such they see their particular brand of anti-state artistry as engaging with conceptual thinking and the intuitive acumen of

²² Lamont-Hill et al 2013

embodied experience (ibid). It is through this self-proclaimed role as “educators” that they assign value to themselves. Whereas I acknowledge the assertion that ‘conscious’ hip hop, simply by virtue of its name, infers *prima facie* that an element of ‘teaching’ is implicit within, it is the manner in which Brothers of the Cape approach this role that further delineates their distinction.

Whilst most crews articulate and intertwine their socio-political ideologies within the lyrical content of their actual rapping, Brothers of the Cape often coalesce such performances with formal ‘lectures’, delivering somewhat academic sermons with an air of pedantic professionalism. The preparation towards these ‘lectures’ fuels the social imaginary, as members use the literary archives and internet accessibility within the ILRIG offices (i.e. Siphos’s place of work) to studiously compile their material. Siphos, in conversation with fellow members regarding an upcoming event, alludes to the denoted weight of the aforementioned in stating “In the morning (of the event) we will be doing all the talking when we’re doing the semi-formal sessions where people will be presenting their speeches or papers...and I think that (i.e. the lectures as opposed to the performance itself) is a lot more serious. I would say we all go and research and then we come back and have a discussion at some point”.

Through these ‘lectures’, Brothers of the Cape invoke an agentive assertion, a socio-political praxis which, whilst aiding in their distinction, contributes to their subversion of the economistic and gerontocratic narratives portraying them as mere silent and disenfranchised ‘objects of contemplation’ (Argenti, 2007; Pietrzyk, 2011). This, and the associated value they attach to themselves²³, is further evident in the way in which members are required to carry ‘mandates’ on behalf of the crew whenever they travel, be it to their kin-based homelands in the Transkei, or in Biko’s case back to Harare in Zimbabwe. Biko reiterates this in stating, “When a comrade through whatever work or means finds himself travelling, it’s important for him to carry some mandates on behalf of the collective”.

²³ The use of the word ‘mandate’ (in conjunction with aforementioned words such as ‘speeches’, ‘papers’, ‘lectures’, and ‘conferences’) illustrates in linguistic succinctness, the value Brothers of the Cape assign to themselves.

These mandates are regarded as formal commissions to undertake the systematic distribution of the crew's doctrine, presented in characteristic 'lecture' format, in the event of any "conferences" (i.e. 'conscious' hip-hop congregations) within that location. This anecdote regarding mandates illustrates the structural functionality of Brothers of the Cape as a professional outfit with formal *modus operandi*, duties, and orders. The rigidity of this rubric is evident as Biko, having attended a 'conference' in Zimbabwe where his family home is located, explains how he was ordered to report back to the association immediately thereafter (rather than spending additional time at home). He says, "I was carrying a mandate from Brothers of the Cape. I was sent there politically. So on my way back I felt like, well I didn't feel like it, I was ordered to come here (i.e. Cape Town) by the collective". Biko's use of the phrase "sent there politically" emphasises how Brothers of the Cape insinuate themselves into positions of political power. This is further underscored by Indigenous' description of the crew as being "a threat to the state", and "being watched by big brother".

So to summarise, Brothers of the Cape fosters a sense of collective identity, reinforced through a specific dogma, which members use to position themselves as educators, invoking an agentic assertion and socio-political praxis structured by a formal rubric which reconfigures how they are viewed by themselves and others. Having outlined this basic framework, the following section will detail: (1) how this basic framework enables them to escape 'inequality traps' by increasing their capacity to aspire; and (2) following on from this, how it forms the basis from which they attempt to 'win the game'.

Firstly, let me reiterate what I mean by the term 'inequality traps'. As I have suggested earlier, I believe that individuals in townships living precarious lives with negative terms of recognition, over time subscribe to norms which further erode their dignity and intensify their inequality. In this way, such individuals are not only subject to such discrimination, but are complicit within it (Dudwick et al, 2006). Such adaptive preference is manifested in their adherence to norms perpetuating and legitimising their lack of power, essentially resulting in these inequality traps – i.e. the embodiment of social dereliction. Liberation from such inequality traps can be achieved through increasing one's capacity to aspire. This entails increasing the capacity to feasibly visualise a pathway between a dream (i.e. an abstract node) and

the actualisation of that dream (i.e. a concrete node), in so doing improving one's life materially or symbolically.

Accepting this premise, I however disagree with the dominant interventionist strand of discourse accompanying it (see: Somerville, 2013, Ray, 2003a, Ray, 2003b, Nussbaum, 2000). This discourse percolates with the implication of non-agentive infantilism, with its prevalent emphasis on governmental (or foreign NGO) intervention as the only means by which these 'victims' can increase their capacity to aspire. As I have argued throughout this paper, Brothers of the Cape are able to increase their capacity to aspire – sans intervention – by utilising their agency to reflect on present subjectivities whilst actively moulding and being moulded by their past and their dreams for an alternative future (Fuh, 2012). This chapter, by focusing on their participation in this field of competition, reiterates that these young men are not simply waiting for intervention whilst dreaming of an alternative future; but are actively forging an alternative future by utilising the projective and practical-evaluative dimensions of agency to enable them to connect such dreams to a plausible means of attaining them.

In this regard associational life – predicated in Brothers of the Cape's case on the basic framework outlined above – creates the possibility of connecting the dots between these abstract and concrete nodes (with the primary concrete nodes within their aspirational mappings being the attainment of respectability and adulthood). So to clarify, Brothers of the Cape are able to escape from the inequality trap by increasing their capacity to aspire through the reconfiguration of how they are viewed – both by themselves and others – actively imagining and actualising an alternative future within this 'novel hierarchy of being' (Fuh, 2012). Having established this, I now wish to build on it by examining how Brothers of the Cape attempt to scale this 'hierarchy of being' (Fuh, 2012) in a bid to 'win the game'.

Firstly, whilst periodic large-scale congregations (e.g. the Mayibuye, and Redefining Afrikanism hip-hop festivals) provide staple amphitheatres for the recurrent accumulation of symbolic capital, Brothers of the Cape doggedly supplement this by wrenching open new spaces of visibility in a bid to further augment their degree of consecration. Akin to the strategies depicted in the biographies of Indigenous and

Khusta, they seek out makeshift platforms such as municipal parks, dusty street corners and disused office spaces from which to be seen and heard. In briefing fellow members on the potential use of a community hall, Zanzolo explains that “We just buy stuff to clean the venue when we are finished with the event”, adding “We should also have an alternative venue if that one doesn’t work out”. In so doing he emphasises both the ingenuity and determination shown towards fashioning these spaces of visibility. Whilst leveraging visibility with such gumption is by no means anomalous to the field, it is the nature of their performances²⁴ that further delineates their distinction. It is through this performative distinction, emphasised by Indigenous who says “We came with something that was totally different in the spaces of hip-hop”, that they bolster their bid for consecration and the conformation as accomplished. Sipho alludes to the valorisation of these self-dubbed “edu-tainment showcases” in claiming that fellow artists “Call us asking when the next event is”.

Overtly distinctive elements of their performance include (apart from the aforementioned ‘lectures’) the acquisition of guest speakers, utilised to lend credence to their rhetoric, as well as to raise their status through association. For example, in planning for one such event Indigenous suggests they “Try and get the grandfather Ready D to join”, referring to Cape Town’s most prestigious ‘conscious’ hip-hop artist. In addition to guest speakers, they screen politicised hip hop documentaries (e.g. *Democracy in Dakar*, pertaining to the pervasive influence of hip-hop during the 2012 Senegalese elections) to convey the revolutionary power they deem to wield. This insinuation is explicated by Sipho who during one such performance, proclaims “We want to change the whole society, and not just Khayelitsha, not just Cape Town, not just South Africa, not just Africa, but the global”. Furthermore, there is the inclusion of a “supporting cast” of curtain-raisers (i.e. artists of a lower echelon) utilised to underscore their eminence. This is explained by Indigenous who says, “We have three main bands and then we become the highlights of the actual event”.

As future-oriented agents determined to scale this ‘hierarchy of being’ (Fuh, 2012) and ‘win the game’, they set high standards for themselves. This is evident during a heated meeting in the wake of an alleged sub-par performance. Sitting in Info’s room,

²⁴ The scope for this degree of creativity is not possible within the framework of the large-scale congregations such as the Mayibuye and Redefining Africanism hip-hop festivals in Khayelitsha.

heads bowed, the tension is tangible as Info pleads “Will somebody break the silence?”. Biko, in conveying the general sentiment, starts by saying “It’s the most horrible feeling when you’re on stage and you’re not giving people the best of what you could have done”. The rest of the members agree, solemnly shaking their heads. Siphso then snaps “When we get to a place we are supposed to work. Let’s focus, let’s stay together, we must first gather our thoughts. It’s work after all”. After a protracted period of silence, he sighs and adds “This is important; this thing is being filmed (on audience members’ phones)”.

Apart from these ‘edu-tainment showcases’, they add to their artistic cachet by inserting themselves into the social milieu of Observatory. Located beyond the confines of the township, newly-gentrified ‘Obs’ is regarded as a prestigious platform by hip-hop crews from Khayelitsha. Given its close proximity to the University, it is somewhat of a social nucleus for students, housing a string of clubs and bars which host live music. Through pleas and persistence they periodically secure performances at these venues. In so doing they are able to further cultivate their degree of consecration whilst establishing connections which aid in their distinction. This is evident in their ‘friending’ of these students on Facebook, and partaking in conspicuous correspondence therein; as well as their use of foreign vocals (courtesy of ‘semester-abroad’ students) on their tracks.

They add to this distinction by priding themselves on being politically controversial, emphasised by Indigenous who says “We’re identified as the craziest group”. This penchant for controversy is particularly evident during a performance in Observatory coinciding with the Nation’s collective celebration of Nelson Mandela’s 95th birthday (a celebration which for them rings hollow as they remain burdened by precarity). Addressing an audience mid-performance at the trendy Armchair bar, Siphso states “Brothers of the Cape have a role in organising people, in educating, in agitating, in fighting for change. We came together to fight the status quo”. Following on from this, Indigenous vehemently bellows, “I still live in a shack! Fuck you Mandela, I hope you die!”. This is met with a moment of silence and unease by the audience. It is through this brazen castigation of Mandela in front of an audience for whom he is sacrosanct, that they are able to achieve their objective of shocking the audience and, with news

of their theatrics reaching fellow crews in Khayelitsha, reaffirming their notoriety as “The craziest group”.

Furthermore, Info’s bedroom is transformed into a makeshift recording studio which they refer to and advertise as ArtMostFear Studios. Despite the ‘studio’ comprising little more than a microphone and some basic sound engineering software, they are able to advance their status by permitting other crews (by way of reserved appointment) to utilise it for recordings. Permission is granted on condition that they are credited within the crew’s album cover (i.e. with the Brothers of the Cape logo appearing prominently within). Such conspicuous branding is further evident in the production of logoed stickers which are handed out during performances; as well through online-flyers disseminated across social media platforms. In addition to this they use graffiti to inscribe their logo into their surroundings. Using x-rays from the local hospital as stencils, they perform “guerrilla operations” to permanently etch themselves into the urban public space of Khayelitsha. In so doing they leverage their visibility amongst fellow crews, whilst garnering acclaim by defying municipal exclusion of space deemed to be out of bounds to youth (Fokwang, 2008). In emphasising this drive to be recognised by other crews, Indigenous says “We want to push the idea of Brothers of the Cape to the point that it’s in your face. You know if you’re sitting in the nearest *shabeen* someone could say ‘have you guys noticed this symbol of Brothers of the Cape?’ ...and then it becomes the talk of the town”.

Thus, it is by these means that they attempt to scale this ‘hierarchy of being’ and ‘win the game’. Their hierarchical progression is evident in claims by both Indigenous, who says “Fellow crews are seeing the progress of the work that we’re doing, and identifying the success”; as well as Info who says “[Fellow crews] go away saying yoh Brothers of the Cape is the shit”. So by utilising collective agency they are able to position themselves as eminent players within the field – thereby achieving psychosocial redemption. This is perhaps best articulated by Siphso who, in response to a festival invitation, remarks “We need to be taken well care of, we are celebrities!”. Thus for these young men, associational life is central to becoming. Born into precarious lives characterised by blocked opportunities, associations (i.e. crews) afford them with new contexts for social mobility. As such, ‘playing the game’ within

this sub-field of restricted production provides a context for a certain way of *being* young, while facilitating certain processes of *becoming* (Rasmussen, 2010).

4.7 Mitigating precarity within the field of cultural production:

As has been discussed, this ‘field of cultural production’ occurs within what Bourdieu (1993) refers to as the ‘sub-field of restricted production’, a field in which the stakes of competition are symbolic (i.e. in this case taking the form of consecration and valorisation). Bourdieu describes this as a ‘universe of belief’, where one’s artistic value is based on the belief in it by players within that field who hold the cultural capital (and hence the embodied code) to decipher it. Accepting this premise and utilising it within my delineation, I however suggest that in totality, Bourdieu’s hypothesis does not adequately account for the nuanced interplay between such artistic production and the encumbrance of precarity.

To make my point it is important to emphasise that the ‘field of cultural production’ is contained within the field of power. As such it is the site of a double hierarchy containing the autonomous principle based on its own internal logic; and the heteronomous principle based on external factors (within the field of power). What this entails is that in the event of the ‘field of cultural production’ losing autonomy the heteronomous principle of hierarchisation would reign uncontested, subjecting artists to the prevailing laws within the field of power (specifically economics); however if the ‘field of cultural production’ were to achieve absolute autonomy (i.e. from market laws) the autonomous principle of hierarchisation would prevail, with success being predicated solely on consecration and valorisation. Thus, ‘playing the game’ (in terms of hierarchical ascendancy) is governed by two interwoven hierarchies, with the more autonomous the field, the more it is able to fulfil its own logic and discount the dominant principle of hierarchisation (i.e. market-oriented positions).

Throughout this chapter I have illustrated how this ‘field of cultural production’ – as a purely ‘prestige economy’ (Fuh, 2012) – has achieved absolute autonomy, with artistic consecration facilitating novel processes of becoming. Within such a wholly autonomous field, Bourdieu claims that the economy of practices is an “economic world reversed”, based on “a game of ‘loser wins’, on a systematic inversion of the

fundamental principles of all ordinary economies” (Bourdieu, 1993: 39) where financial compensation is disavowed and a “profit of disinterestedness” (ibid: 15) takes effect. However for artists within this particular field, orthodox subscription to such notions is unfeasible due to the constraints of precarity. So whilst in no way related to a correlation between hierarchical ascendancy and the heteronomous principle of hierarchisation, small amounts of artistic remuneration (i.e. in the form of R5-R10 entrance fees) are accrued by artists to mitigate financial precarity.

In Brothers of the Cape’s case, these fees are charged during their ‘edu-tainment showcases’, contributing to the basic living expenses of the crew. This forms the primary income for most members, with only Sipho holding formal employment. As such, this collective accumulation of money does on occasion result in internal disputes. This is evident in the following anecdote, when post-event Indigenous queries the whereabouts of the accrued sum, enquiring “When are we going to move the money to the bank? Because the more money stays around, the more people use money”. Sipho replies stating, “I have no record of such comrade”. To which Indigenous responds “I’m not saying you would use the money”. Sipho, visibly irate retorts “It’s with me now. I’ll put it in the bank as soon as we’re done, but I do not like the insinuation”.

4.8 New avenues of citizenship:

Performing in front of a large crowd of fellow youth, Brothers of the Cape members raise clenched fists as Khusta fuses political rhetoric into melodic stanzas. Exuding a plenipotentary air akin to a modern day griot²⁵, he rhythmically bellows “In Khayelitsha our people are oppressed on a daily basis. Our people struggle to get basic things. Other people are running their lives for them. They can’t really have a voice of their own. There’s gonna come a day where people will put a stop to it and say enough is enough!”. This is met with vociferous cheering and isiXhosa chants of solidarity. Events of this nature, where hip-hop is used as a vehicle to facilitate consciousness, emphasise how the artistic endeavours of these crews position them as ‘insurgent citizens’ (Holston, 2009).

²⁵ Griots are the endogamous caste of (pre-colonial) West African councillors, praise singers and oral historians (Fredericks, 2013).

The growing pluralistic intensity in Cape Town as a result of rapid urbanisation is exhausting conventional ideas of citizenship, and we are seeing ‘insurgent citizenships’ being formed out of the struggle for inclusion in the modern state (Pieterse, 2010). In Khayelitsha, the proliferation of such sites of engagement is most overtly evident in the large-scale hip-hop events (e.g. Mayibuye) which unite crews across the township. These events which draw on Frantz Fanon’s writings on grassroots liberation to connect their struggle to neo-liberal political ideologies, command epistemological space which emphasises productive engagement despite their precarious socio-economic realities (Pietrzyk, 2010).

Popular discourse claims that the township is devoid of the fertility to cultivate a sense of dignity, quashing its inhabitants into totalizing characterizations which perpetuate an over-determination of impoverishment (Holston, 2009). This understanding fails to account for emerging spaces of agency. These ‘insurgent citizenships’ subvert such discourse, using both invention and agency in their ability to draw on popular music as a means of recognition and voice. And it is through the symbolic registers and reclaiming of public space by these hip-hop crews, that they are able to forge an alternate means of inclusivity within the city’s public sphere (Pieterse, 2010).

4.9 Conclusion:

In this chapter I have examined how Brothers of the Cape appropriate ideas of the ‘Struggle’ crafted during apartheid to assign value to themselves. By adopting various strategies (i.e. inter-actions encompassing performance, rules and regulations and discourse) they are able to create a sense of distinction whilst gaining visibility and recognition. This recognition is negotiated within Khayelitsha’s field of conscious hip-hop, as they vie with other players (i.e. crews) for social capital in the form of consecration and valorisation. For these young men, this arena of incarnation and competition serves to replace ‘old predictabilities’ (Furlong, 2000), providing a new context for social mobility; as well as new possibilities for the attainment of respectable adulthood. Thus this ‘novel hierarchy of being’ (Fuh, 2012) is a space where youth associations can imagine (and actualise) alternative futures. In a context of uncertainty, collective participation in this competitive space generates meaning

and coherence, stabilising precariousness in everyday life. It provides such youth with a platform to exercise new modalities and reconfigure the geographies of inclusion and exclusion. As such, ‘playing the game’ within this field provides a context for a certain way of *being* young, while facilitating a certain process of *becoming*.

In the next chapter I examine how Brothers of the Cape extend their appropriation of the ‘Struggle’ beyond their involvement in the field of conscious hip-hop. Through these additional repertoires and performances, they index their aspirational mappings and the various spatial terrains they straddle in order to increase their capacity to aspire. In so doing they emerge as *bricoleurs* as part of an agentive strategy of social capital accumulation. Just as the life histories of Indigenous and Khusta illustrate, Brothers of the Cape utilise their subjective inventiveness in viewing their ‘spatial terrain as an oeuvre’ (Nuttall, 2004) through which they can work various networks and spaces – in so doing navigating their aspirational mappings and maximising their potential to become.

Chapter 5: Moral Vanguardism and Critical Civic Praxis:

5.1 Abstract:

This chapter examines how Brothers of the Cape extend their appropriation of the ‘Struggle’ beyond their involvement in the field of conscious hip-hop. In this regard it engages with their strategic participation in (1) moral praxis as moral vanguards; and (2) critical civic praxis as political actors. Firstly in their role as moral vanguards, the chapter frames their moral context as a ‘moral ecology’, demonstrating how they draw on local notions of respectability in order to gain approval from elders and be recognised as respectable social adults who are acutely involved in the moral preservation of the community (e.g. through anti-gangsterism and anti-substance abuse campaigns). Secondly by detailing their involvement in critical civic praxis (e.g. through protests involving police brutality, housing, sanitation), the chapter illustrates how they position themselves as an alternative site of power at the forefront of communal affairs, thereby legitimating their status as established political players and accomplished social adults. In so doing, the chapter attempts to lay a framework for understanding the ‘performance of revolution’ inherent in such activism as an end in itself, and not simply as a means to an end. Lastly, in examining the meaning these young men ascribe to geographical movement (with regards to the undertaking of such activism), the chapter demonstrates how for them movement becomes an integral part of their incarnation as eminent political actors on the national stage.

5.2 Moral vanguards:

Firstly, let me outline the context in which I use the notion of ‘morality’. I approach Brothers of the Cape’s lived moral context through an anthropological optic as a ‘moral ecology’ (Swartz, 2010), in the sense of it being an interconnected relationship between actor and social environment, with ‘morality’ being used as a means towards attaining local notions of respectability and laying claim to adult social status. This lived moral context (despite it being a navigational strategy) counters dominant discourse portraying young men from the townships as moral deviants. Such a label, which depicts them as being controlled by their frustrations and hence prone to criminal proclivities, has resulted in the tendency of bureaucrats to assume a

discursive high ground by adhering to this construction of them as a ‘problem’ which must be controlled (Maclure and Sotelo, 2004).

The irony is that Brothers of the Cape (i.e. as young men) conceive of a moral corrosion of gerontocratic authority, with corruption running rife in the wake of the abandonment of rectitude. As Sipho claims, “Politicians don’t give a damn about workers and the poor; all they care about is their own power. They will tell us anything to get nice jobs in parliament. When politicians get into the state, whether at a municipal or national level, all they do is pass laws and put in place policies that benefit themselves and their rich friends. They protect their own interests and those of their allies in the form of the capitalists”. By adopting a moral ethos, Brothers of the Cape enunciate a new sociability, antithetical to the moral decay perceived to have presided over the post-apartheid liberation party. This shows an alternative ‘way of being’ in a bid to display locally informed markers of maturity. Through their moral praxis they lay claim to adult social status, empowering themselves in their positioning as moral vanguards whom the community can depend on for regeneration and the rooting out of social ills. This ascribed value is emphasised by Khusta who, in reference to their role in moral conservation, states “People are looking up to us. If there’s a struggle in that community, we come into that community and we assist”.

These interventions are carried out in public spaces such as parks or community halls and predominantly pertain to issues surrounding gangsterism and substance abuse. The typical structure includes a characteristic ‘lecture’ accompanied by a visual component. For example, in preparation for one such intervention (in this instance addressing Site C youth on the perils of gangsterism) Indigenous suggests to fellow members that they preface their lecture by screening gang-related footage of Khayelitsha youth “fighting with knives, *panga*²⁶, and machetes”. He explains the value of screening such footage by stating “They will get to see it’s in their own community and that these are people using their same language. So they will see the destruction they cause among themselves”. In relation to such events, Sipho says “The key message we want to be sending is the positive vibes of young people. Them uniting. Them changing their ways”. This ‘message of change’ is reiterated by

²⁶ The ‘panga’ derived from Swahili etymology is a Southern African cultural variant of the machete.

Indigenous, who proudly states “We’re influencing them (the Khayelitsha youth) and they’re taking these ideas and influencing others. It is important because it means that if a young male is thinking of negative things, the next person is always going to remind him ‘we’re not about this’ and might motivate him to go jogging in the morning or do volunteering work. So there’s always a second voice on hand. When you have a second voice you can make rational decisions”. Organised events of this nature illustrate how Brothers of the Cape members construct their moral praxis by drawing on local notions of respectability in order to gain approval from elders and be recognised as established adults who are acutely involved in the moral preservation of the community.

5.3 Critical civic praxis:

“We’re concerned about achieving a revolution” – one of the first phrases conveyed to me on the day I was introduced to Brothers of the Cape.

A further way in which they attempt to forge respectable adult lives is through their involvement in socio-political activism. This activism needs to be understood in the context of a national separation between power (i.e. the ability to get things done) and politics (i.e. the means to get things done). In the wake of the ‘1994 miracle’ the ANC is quick to tout the nascent democracy as upholding a system which facilitates the exercising of power by its citizens. Yet in actuality what we are seeing is free market capitalism (i.e. in the form of supranational trade corporations) systematically dissociating politics from power (Critchley cited in Honwana, 2013). Therefore bereft of power, politics stays localised in the nation-state and caters to the needs of these supranational trade corporations at the expense of the will of its citizens (ibid). This results in a democratic charade, as the outsourcing of sovereignty sees politics simply serving power (ibid).

It is in the context of this divorce between power and politics that Brothers of the Cape fashion alternative sites of political engagement beyond the realm of party politics. Priding themselves on being non-partisan, their scope of critical civic praxis includes protests against police brutality (e.g. the killing of community activist

Andries Tatane²⁷); campaigning for housing and sanitation in the township of Delft; and remonstrating in support of striking farm workers in De Doorns²⁸. Sipho emphasises their relentless refusal to be ignored in stating “Right in the middle of the road or in the park we set up a sound system and we start speaking to the politics of the community. We are prepared to do the dirty work of going door to door, of standing at the taxi rank with a loudhailer and blowing political rhetoric”.

This is evident, quite literally, in their commemorative service to mark the anniversary of the tragic ‘Marikana massacre’²⁹. Standing with a loudhailer at the Khayelitsha taxi rank, Mawethu fervently urges commuters to “Remember Marikana!”. The rest of the members, occupying a conspicuous space on the rank’s periphery, set about assembling a makeshift stage comprising two wooden pallets covered by a blanket. Above the stage a banner is hung containing the Brothers of the Cape logo and the phrase “We are all Marikana”. Sipho weaves through the crowd distributing remembrance badges, as Biko sets up a table on which he displays pamphlets propagating their views on a ‘culture of impunity’. As a crowd starts to gather, proceedings get underway with Zanzolo introducing Brothers of the Cape and conveying their sentiments on the alleged ignominy of the State. Candles are then handed out to each member of the crowd, as Mawethu and Zanzolo slowly and solemnly read out the names of each of the deceased. This is followed by the chanting of isiXhosa protest songs, bathing the rank in the incandescence of a defiant youth spirit refusing to succumb to socio-political delineations portraying them as impotent ‘cadets who are to be seen and not heard’ (Warnier, 1996; Argenti, 2007).

Whilst a bed sheet is erected against the wall and a projector set up to display video footage of the Marikana tragedy, Sipho prefaces the screening by saying “As a political group we have set ourselves up strategically and intentionally in support of working class strugglers. As a collective that is set up like us it’s important that we

²⁷ Andries Tatane, a community activist, was killed during clashes with police at a service delivery march outside the Setsoto municipal offices in Ficksburg in April 2011.

²⁸ The De Doorns Farm Workers Strike occurred in August 2012 due to neo-liberal agricultural policies. It resulted in the death of three protesters amidst violent clashes with police.

²⁹ The Marikana or Lonmin Strike occurred in August 2012 in Rustenburg, resulting in deadly clashes between the SAPS, the leadership of the National union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the striking miners. Forty-four people died (the majority of which were mineworkers) predicated on the ‘shoot to kill’ doctrine implemented by then Commissioner of Police Bheki Cele (Breckenridge, 2014).

start direct action again and again, as part of what we call counter culture... Today is a year after the killings, actually I'm against that term 'the killings', it was a massacre, we mustn't use any other term. In August there was a lot of picketing marches and rallies. But for Brothers of the Cape we think that somehow we failed as working class people to use that opportunity to build a movement that challenges the ANC significantly; a movement that challenges the status quo significantly. So we want to reflect on the struggle of those people and also our own struggle and how we are related to that. In the banner we have written 'We are all Marikana'".

What Sipho refers to in this banner is the fact that certain South Africans' lives are not conceived of or do not qualify as 'lives' within certain epistemological frames (Butler, 2010). This means the rendering of a particular type of political subject who is not recognised as worth protecting or nurturing. As discussed throughout this dissertation, for these young men from Brothers of the Cape who form part of this faceless throng of disposable subjects left unrecognised by the capitalist state, their lives have been characterised by blocked opportunities. As such they have been denied access to the social and economic resources with which to pursue conventional trajectories towards adulthood. As growing discontent amongst such youth sees the proliferation of these sites of political engagement, Honwana poses the following question as to whether youth associations such as Brothers of the Cape will be able to revolutionise political ideology and fix 'failed transitions to adulthood' (i.e. what she terms 'waithood'):

"Will civil society associations, as platforms of political action, be enough to help steer meaningful political change? Will it be possible for the younger generation to drive the creation of a new political culture from outside dominant political structures? [...] Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the 'waithood generation' is already standing up for itself" – Honwana (2013:8)

5.3.1 A response to Honwana:

In response to this, I suggest that instead of viewing this 'performance of revolution' (in the present tense) solely as a means to an end, we should view it as an end in itself. Situating Honwana's question within her conceptual framework centred on the term 'waithood', a portmanteau word encompassing 'wait' and 'hood' to mean 'waiting for adulthood', I suggest that instead of conceiving of these platforms of political action solely as means towards achieving revolution (the implication of which being the

engendering of liberation from 'waithood's' state of temporality by way of unclogging the socio-economic arteries currently stymieing conventional transition to adulthood), we should adopt a more nuanced approach, viewing such civil society associations as a way for youth to accumulate social capital and lay claim to adult social status – despite their socio-economic predicament – by reconfiguring the geographies of inclusion and exclusion through agentive new modalities which position them as established political actors.

Therefore whilst I agree that neo-liberalism, as the ideological bedfellow of the ANC, has resulted in blocked opportunities in the transition to social adulthood, I dispute Honwana's (2013:3) claims that following its inception, "New ways of attaining adult status are yet to be developed", and that adulthood still "Depends on men moving beyond waithood" (ibid:4), a feat actuated through revolution. As this dissertation shows, by being part of such a civil society association, members of Brothers of the Cape are able to transcend this so-called 'failed transition', utilising their socio-political modalities to renounce their terms of recognition and lay claim to adult social status.

Brothers of the Cape's conspicuous presence in the townships, exhibited in their multiple campaigns of critical civic praxis, occurs in a context in which the Democratic Alliance, as the governing party of the Western Cape, is seen to have failed to recognise the lives of such political subjects (i.e. township inhabitants) as worth protecting. This is reiterated by Indigenous who says, "There is a necessity in our own community to organise because we are there on our own. Nobody is going to change it except if we (Brothers of the Cape) change it". By positioning themselves as an alternative site of power at the forefront of communal affairs they stake their claim as established political players and accomplished social adults (Fokwang, 2008). In this regard associational life is central to becoming, with members as both social navigators of the present and social generators of an alternative future, drawing on collective agency to challenge infantilisation and forge respectable adult lives amidst precarity.

5.4 Mobility as a socially produced motion:

Further unpacking their scope of critical civic praxis, this section examines the emphasis Brothers of the Cape place on geographical movement in their attempts to position themselves as established socio-political actors on the national stage. By focusing on their journey to Rhini – and the meaning ascribed to movement – I draw linkages between spatial mobility and the potential for social mobility. Firstly as a starting point, I conceive of mobility as a socially produced motion, a geographical action infused with meaning. In this regard movement is more than just movement, but embodies meaning: when this meaning is ascribed, movement then becomes mobility (Langevang et al, 2009). Within environments plagued by socio-economic precarity, where the potential for mobility is unevenly distributed, movement in physical space becomes a source of status and prestige (Sheller and Urry 2006). It is within this context that I frame the meaning Brothers of the Cape ascribe to movement, as they seek to reconstruct themselves as eminent contra state players with nationwide socio-political clout.

Such ascribed meaning is evident as members willingly go without daily essentials in order to amass the required bus fare to partake in their ‘campaigns of expansion’. For example, in speaking before one such ‘campaign’, Indigenous says “There is literally nothing in my cupboard, this whole month I’ve been surviving on a bag of rice and potatoes”. These campaigns include travelling to Durban to protest outside the COP17 United Nations Conference³⁰; as well as to Gauteng to “maintain a high profile” in support of mineworkers at Lonmin’s Marikana mine. Addressing fellow members in relation to the latter, Sipho describes it as an opportunity to “take advantage of the space for political work...as a way to push the movement and make inroads into Joburg”. This sentiment is echoed by Indigenous who stresses the importance of “securing radio interviews and media coverage while in Gauteng”.

Thus for Brothers of the Cape, movement is not just movement, but becomes a voyage into the realm of the imaginary, an extension of their greater figurative voyage from social dereliction to psychosocial redemption (Gondola, 1999). What I mean by

³⁰ COP17/CMP7: the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

this, is that the actualising of such spatial mobility (at whatever cost) is integral to the dramatisation of their dreamlike reincarnation as eminent socio-political actors on the national stage. This postulation contributes to an emerging view on mobility within precarious environments³¹, emphasising that within the theatres of sociability in which daily life is enacted, the meaning ascribed to spatial mobility is indicative of its role in processes of social becoming (Langevang et al, 2009). Thus through these campaigns of expansion Brothers of the Cape are able to further delineate their collective distinction, ‘performing symbols of bigness’ (Fuh, 2012) to reposition themselves as collectively accomplished.

5.4.1 The journey to Rhini:

The journey to Rhini provides an optic to closer examine such ascribed meaning to movement. This campaign is predicated on Rhini (i.e. the isiXhosa name for Grahamstown) playing host to the annual National Arts Festival. In explaining the political reasoning behind their planned attendance to such, Siphosho states “The National Arts Festival is an elite festival. Poor people are excluded. Even if art is made about poor people by rich people we can’t afford to come and see it. And in most cases, arts festivals that are organised and supported by corporations and governmental departments normalise oppression and exploitation [Therefore Brothers of the Cape]³² will host the Rhini Festival of Resistance. We will discuss the role of art and culture in our struggles, histories and philosophies of struggle; and the state of oppression and resistance in South Africa. We will discuss how to take the rebellion of the poor to the next level never forgetting that communism is the real movement that abolishes the present state of things from below”.

In order to actualise such spatial mobility, members undertake funding ventures in the months leading up to such campaigns. As is the case in the aforementioned campaign, this predominantly takes the form of donation sheets which members are required to

³¹ Dubbed the ‘mobility turn’ in current academia.

³² Additional reference is made to the role of the Unemployed Peoples Movement and the UHURU Network.

carry at all times³³. Targeting taxi ranks, hospitals, traffic lights and school staffrooms, solicited amounts vary from as little as 50c to R100 or more. Accrual is location dependent, with larger amounts generally amassed beyond the confines of the township itself (e.g. Accompanying Indigenous to the Arts and Culture Indaba at the City Hall, he was able to collect R300 from participants). Such efforts aid in their transportation – both literally and figuratively – from ‘stake to stakeholder’ (Utas, 2012). Herein lies what Gondola refers to as ‘the dream and the drama’. Through such funding ventures they are able to purchase the R680 bus tickets to Rhini, facilitating the ‘drama’ integral to their ‘dream’ of being perceived as established socio-political actors on the national stage. Yet this analogy (i.e. the ‘drama’) can be misconstrued and needs clarification. They are not mere actors: sitting on the bus to Rhini they do not pretend to be eminent, they are. In this regard it is incarnation rather than imitation, conveyed by Gondola (1999:41) as “The death of reality and its reincarnation in dreams”.

This incarnation is evident in their self-assured letter to the director of the National Arts Festival, formally requesting he engage with them in a public debate (during the Festival itself) on the merits of the event. Prior to the submittal of this overture, Sipho proposes the idea to fellow members, stating “If the director of this festival in Grahamstown wants to speak to us then we should meet him. And I suggest that we call him to address the community of Rhini on what the Grahamstown Festival is, what it’s offering the community. Of course he will say it’s developing the economy of Rhini and all of those things, so we must be there and have this session, this public discussion”.

The weeks leading up to the campaign are important in their own right, with the ferment of anticipation and excitement forming the prologue to their dramatic journey. Meetings brim with zeal as members plan logistics, speeches, and proposed performances. In the case of Rhini, accommodation is arranged at the premises of the Unemployed Peoples Movement, located in the nearby township. Various sites of protest are marked out within the Festival confines; and emphasis is placed on

³³ In the case of Rhini, attempts (albeit unsuccessful) are made to obtain further assistance from the Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC); the Democratic Left Front; Industrial Development Corporation; Norwegian Peoples Aid; X minus Y; and Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

“turning Grahamstown into a canvas”. This last point references their bid to make an indelible imprint: literally in stencilling their logo into the urban landscape, and perhaps figuratively in leaving an allusion – a Paladin trademark of sorts – to punctuate their socio-political presence in the town. After these meetings, select details pertaining to the upcoming campaign are then disseminated across social media platforms in order to conspicuously convey their eminence to fellow activist groups.

Following the journey to Rhini, the campaign is deemed an overwhelming success, with members basking in the afterglow of its fruition. Despite failing to secure a public debate with the director of the Festival, the protests and attained media coverage (radio, newspaper and online) serve to further legitimate their incarnation as established contra state players. The fruits of their labour are most evident in their receiving of a ‘cease and desist’ letter from Festival organisers, with the formal act of acknowledgement ratifying their socio-political presence. This is reiterated by Biko who says “I am particularly happy because it seems politically we are having an impact with the organisers and the politicians associated with the Festival writing us a hate letter”. This letter contributes to the drama of their psychosocial redemption, providing a window for dialogue, and prompting an urgent meeting to collectively pen a defiant response.

The protests eliciting the ‘cease and desist’ letter are recorded (via cell phone) and uploaded to YouTube and Facebook, with the consequent ‘likes’ and congratulatory comments from fellow activist groups – as virtual salutes of gallantry and respect – serving as the veritable spoils of war. In recounting the filming of their much lauded ‘flash mob’ (enacted as they stormed the centre of the Festival and disrupted proceedings) Indigenous states “We started *toyi-toying* and there was this heavy chanting of songs. We decided to do a flash mob and go straight to the Green Village (the central area of the Festival) and we started chanting inside that space and we captured that. It was something very strong”.

Apart from the protests themselves, visibility is successfully leveraged through both their graffiti campaign; as well as through their opportunistic attachment to a local political struggle in the surrounding township. In carrying out late night “guerrilla

operations” their proposed plan of ‘turning Grahamstown into a canvas’ (bearing their logo) is actualised. This is explained by Khusta who says “We drove around town tagging the walls; it was direct action, direct messages in countering the Festival”. This presence is then further amplified by their strategic attachment to a local ‘housing allocation’ march, swooping in like the proverbial ‘White Knight’ to heroically champion the informal settlement’s cause – in so doing revelling in their ‘celebrity’ status. This is recalled by Info who states that in the wake of the march, “The guys were excited, they were like ‘we’re going out now, we’re going to have some celebrity kind of hugs!’”.

In summary, through utilising the journey to Rhini as an optic to closer examine the meaning Brothers of the Cape ascribe to movement, I have drawn linkages between spatial mobility and the (agentive) potential for social mobility. It is evident that for these young men, movement is not just movement, but becomes a voyage into the realm of incarnation, an extension of their greater figurative voyage from social dereliction to psychosocial redemption. Therefore such movement, including both the prologue and epilogue (i.e. the compilation of formal reports), provides the drama integral to their dream of being perceived as collectively accomplished.

5.5 Conclusion:

In this chapter I have examined how members of Brothers of the Cape draw on social and political activism to lay claim to social adulthood. Firstly in their role as moral vanguards, I have demonstrated how they construct their moral praxis by drawing on local notions of respectability in order to gain approval from elders and be recognised as respectable social adults who are acutely involved in the moral preservation of the community. Secondly in their involvement in critical civic praxis, I have illustrated how they strategically position themselves as an alternative site of power at the forefront of communal affairs, thereby legitimating their status as established political players and accomplished social adults (Fokwang, 2008). As such, I have suggested that the ‘performance of revolution’ inherent in such activism ought to be viewed as an end in itself, and not solely as a means to an end. Lastly, in examining the meaning these young men ascribe to geographical movement (with regards to the undertaking of such activism), I have demonstrated how for them movement becomes an integral

part of their incarnation as eminent political actors on the national stage. In sum, this chapter has shown how members of Brothers of the Cape are both positioned and position themselves within their socio-generational category; thereby contributing to a discussion on 'youth' as being socio-politically constructed yet open to the construction of counter-positions by way of agentive navigation.

Conclusion:

In this dissertation I have argued that the young men of Brothers of the Cape are actively involved in forging alternative futures amidst precarity. As future-oriented agents who intentionally act to actualise their aspirational goals in praxis, they counter dominant discourse which has tended to theorise them (i.e. marginalised youth) in dichotomous terms: either *at risk* or *as risk*. Through involvement in associational life, these young men are able to reposition themselves as collectively accomplished. This is achieved through inter-actions and strategic practices which provide them with a means to create distinction whilst gaining visibility and recognition. This recognition is negotiated in novel fields of competition where they vie with other associations for social capital in the form of prestige. These ‘hierarchies of being’ (Fuh, 2012) replace ‘old predictabilities’ (Furlong, 2000) to provide new possibilities for the attainment of respectability and social adulthood. In this regard associational life is central to becoming: for marginalised youth with scant possibility of accumulation and redistribution, associations such as Brothers of the Cape are able to provide new contexts for social mobility. This is further evident in the way in which Brothers of the Cape serves as a vehicle for its members to move from ‘stake to stakeholder in socio-political affairs’ (Utas, 2012). By adopting adult practices through their involvement in critical civic praxis, these young men are able to position themselves as an alternative site of power at the forefront of national and communal affairs, thereby legitimating their status as established political players and accomplished social adults (Fokwang, 2008). Through this incarnation of eminence they are able to circumvent ‘failed transitions’ and access gerontocratic prestige. As they chart these trajectories from social dereliction to psychosocial redemption, they reconfigure the geographies of exclusion and inclusion: thereby shedding light on the ways in which youth is socio-politically constructed (i.e. in reference to precarity) yet open to the construction of counter-positions by way of agentive navigation (e.g. through association).

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